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“A CASE STUDY ON VOLKSWAGEN PRINT AD **THINK SMALL**”

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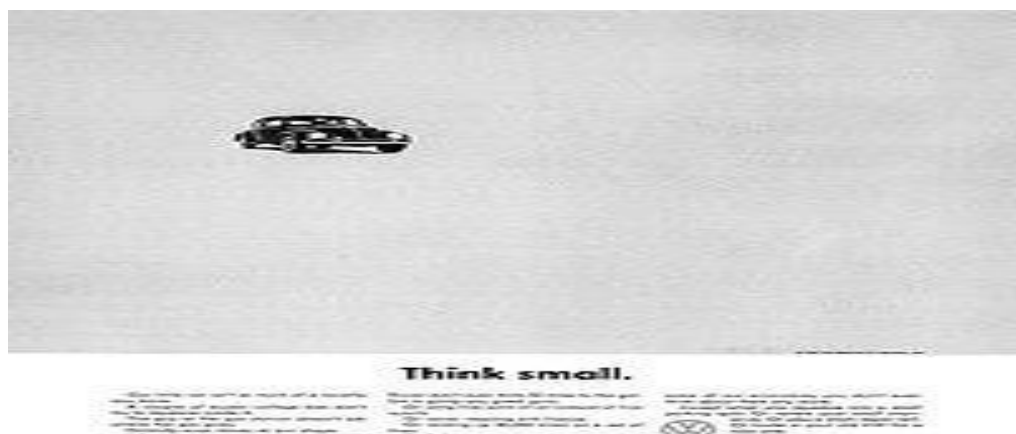
ABSTRACT

Advertising is a marketing communication that employs an openly sponsored, non-personal message to promote or sell a product, service or idea. Sponsors of advertising are typically businesses wishing to promote their products or services. The objective of this research paper was to examine the changing perceptions in advertising, its positive and negative effects on brands. For achieving the objective of the study secondary data was analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Ogilvy's simplest, yet most insightful definition of advertising, is one that requires the content to avoid distracting from the message: *“A good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself.”*

VISUAL RHETORIC



Volkswagen - Helmut Krone directed one of the most famous ads in advertising campaign for the Volkswagen Beetle. The copy of **Think small** was written by Julian Koeing at Doyle Dane Bembach agency in 1959. Doyle Dane Bernbach's Volkswagen Beetle campaign was ranked best advertising campaign of the twentieth century by Ad age in a survey of advertisements. The campaign has been considered that it “did much more than boost sales and build a lifetime of brand loyalty. The Beetle, a compact, strange –looking automobile”, was manufactured in a plant by Nazis in Wolfsburg, Germany. DDB built a print campaign that focused on Beetle's form, which was smaller than most of the cars being sold at that time. The unique focus in an automobile advertisement brought wide attention to Beetle. DDB had “simplicity in mind, contradicting the traditional association of automobiles luxury”. Print ads for campaign were filled mostly with the white space, with a small beetle shown which was meant to emphasize its simplicity and minimalism, and the text and the fine print that appeared at the bottom of the page listed the advantages of owning a small car. The creative execution broke with convention in several ways. The theories models used in traditional advertising were challenged and non-evaluation thinking was used as a tool. Although the layout used the traditional format-image, headline and three column body were retained, other differences were subtle yet sufficient to make the advertisement stand out. It included a full-stop after the tagline “Think Small.” The body copy was full of widows and orphans – all designed to give ad a natural and honest feel. The image of the car was placed in the top left corner and angled in a way that directed the reader's attention towards the headline. Finally, the ad was printed in black and white, at a time when color advertisements were widely used.

The campaign has been subject of a number of books, with serious scholarly analysis of the company's key success factors including: *Think Small: The story of those Volkswagen Ads* by Frank Rowsome(1970). *Think Small: The story of the World's Greatest Ad* (2011) by Dominik Imseng, and *Thinking Small: The Long, Strange Trip of the Volkswagen Beetle* (2012) by andrea Hiott.

The 50s and 60s were a time when cars weren't just a way to get the kids to school. Cars were fashion statements, testosterone boosters, muscles on wheels. They were built to be fast, big, stylish and the ultimate way to earn bragging points. It's a classic straw man situation. They set up this ideal car and told you why the VW wasn't anything like it, then they bashed in the straw man by telling you how this was a good thing. The VW isn't fast, so it doesn't guzzle gas, burn through tires or need frequent repairs. Wait, that sounds pretty nice actually. It's not fast, it's smart. Also note how the car is discussed in the ads. It's frequently referred to as a “VW” instead of a Volkswagen. VW is cool, fresh, simple and friendly. They planted this thought in your head without you even realizing it! To highlight and reinforce this message, the graphics had to be stellar. The answer? Whitespace and lots of it. This isn't a “lifestyle” ad. The car isn't depicted as an integral piece of the daily lives of a smiling, middle class family. It's a black dot on a sea of white. Tied together with the headline, “Think Small,” this was paradoxically an understatement that was somehow bold and shocking. Maybe owning a small car was a good thing after all, maybe it was even a great thing an empty background, your eyes are forced to take in the car. This tricks you into seeing the vehicle in a new light; the way the designers saw

it. Not as an ugly foreign car in a sea of American beauties but as a uniquely attractive design statement oozing with personality.

The ad copy may have appealed to the family man, but the high fashion, personality-driven visuals in this campaign would lead the Volkswagen on to become a favorite among teenagers looking to make a statement.

But you simply can't put a value on perspective. It's such an amazing example of how designers and marketers can influence the minds of an entire generation. Good design changes the world that simply can't get enough of it. Automobile advertisements focused on providing as much information as possible to the reader instead of persuading the reader to purchase a product, and the advertisements were typically rooted more in fantasy than reality”

The Creative Revolution:

This new era in marketing schemes attempted to associate the product being advertised with an idea or way of living. Companies were no longer just trying to sell consumers a product, now they were trying to sell a lifestyle. (Mathew) This was quite a change from previous campaigns of the century where marketers attempted to “motivate” consumers into purchasing their product boasting that said product was a type of status symbol. “Beetle ownership allowed you to show off that you didn't need to show off” (Garfield) This type of aesthetic is just as important today as it has ever been. “More and more these days, the creative world is seeing an emergence of artists creating positive spaces and shapes that, in turn, cleverly carve out shapes in negative space intentionally. And the results can be stunning. the American advertising firm responsible for Think Small, is still in existence today and going as strong as ever. Established in 1949 DDB & Co. “gave the advertising industry a wake-up call. They introduced a new approach to marketing that relied on insight into human nature, respect for the consumer, and the power of creativity. In short, they said; “Let's stop talking at people and instead start conversations that lead to action and mutual benefit.”

The Role of The Advertiser

A popular idea still used today has its origins in the 1940s. It is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP), a term coined by Rosser Reeves. The simple idea behind a USP is to highlight a benefit of a product which competitors did not have. This benefit would then be hammered home again and again. Another belief was that research should form the underpinnings of any campaign. Layouts, copy and other elements of an ad were all to be extensively tested and based in “theory”. The field of psychology invented by Sigmund Freud was also influencing advertising. Psychologists were laying the subconscious of the general public on display and ad men had no trouble in exploiting this. Advertising depicted a world full of stylish individuals enjoying perpetual happiness.

CONCLUSION

The Volkswagen Beetle had a troubled start to its life. The Austrian Ferdinand Porsche was born in 1875 and had two dreams. The first was to build racing cars. The first was to build racing cars. Motorcars in early twentieth century Europe were generally viewed with suspicion, a plaything of the wealthy. Early vehicles were noisy and scared horses. It was the advent of motor racing that helped fuel the first wide spread enthusiasm for cars. His other dream was to build an inexpensive vehicle for the German people. As the 1920s continued, he became increasingly convinced that a small vehicle for the everyday. The Volkswagen was beginning to sell extensively throughout Europe during the 1950s as laws regulating exports from Germany were relaxed. The car was becoming popular. Through word-of-mouth advertising, the Volkswagen was even selling in America to those who weren't convinced by the stylish and expensive offerings from Chevrolet and Oldsmobile. With sales of 100,000 Volkswagens in 1958, the major manufacturers could no longer ignore the market for small cars and were gearing up to release their own. To tackle this incoming threat Volkswagen sent a man named Carl Hahn to America. His job was to do something that Volkswagen hadn't really done before—advertise.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The entire ad was printed in black and white, mainly because Volkswagen didn't have enough money to print it in color. Everything about the ad screams honesty and simplicity. At the time, the advert was viewed with suspicion by those on Madison Avenue. The public, however, had a different reaction. People talked about it around the water cooler. Teenagers ripped it out of magazines and pinned it to their walls. It became, temporarily, more than just another ad. The sales figures backed up the approach when DDB learned about the sales impacts the ads were having.

THE IMPACT:

It's part of a cultural shift, the Think Small ad and the ones that followed marked a true shift in the advertising landscape. The customer was trusted to be smart enough to work things out since the copy didn't speak down to anyone. Suddenly there was an ad that appealed to people's intelligence in a way that the style-based campaigns of the past had not. Honesty as a selling point had never really been tried before, at least on a major campaign such as for a large car manufacturer. The ad tapped into a sense of disconnect that the public was feeling as a result of being pressured to buy and consume for so many years. This was especially felt by younger people. The influence of Think Small is still seen today.

Stylistically the ad started a shift from illustrations toward a greater use of photography. The crisp sans-serifs would be used in the corporate identities of later decades. Copywriters would not just explain product features any longer, suddenly tone of voice became an important part of their job.

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