



Commercials

A little back-story...

If you have ever watched a TV program, you already know a considerable amount about commercials. Lengths are primarily split between :30 and :60 seconds, are entertaining and designed to do one thing: sell a product. Some may consider commercials an annoying nuance when watching the Simpson's, but without commercials TV programming would not exist. TV shows are created for the sole purpose of pulling in top ratings (the most viewers), so that a network can sell more commercials. In short, Television is only filler to suck the audience into watching commercials, and we eat the stuff up.

We all know that the economy is run by consumers. We purchase products from companies because that company offers a better product at a competitive price; theoretically. We buy things based on a ton of different factors, what we can afford, what is stylish and cool, things that we *are familiar with*. If you see Adidas® slam dunking some baskets on TV, the next time you are in Foot Locker, those Adidas® will have the upper hand on any other pair of shoes before you have tried them on because you are familiar with the brand. But alas, this is also a theoretical situation. In reality, all companies know advertising is essential to success, and as a result we, the consumers, are constantly being nagged at, left and right so corporations can take our money and replace it with things we don't need. Lets add to the chaos.

So you want to make a commercial?

Before you ever place your hand on a camera, or a storyboard, or a script for that matter, you need to find your target audience. I know what your thinking; "I have economics second period, I don't need to hear this". Take into consideration that every commercial is designed (note the word designed) with a target audience in mind (that rhymed). Without a target audience, to be cost effective, an advertising firm would just purchase the cheapest airtime possible, selling acne medication to retired seniors watching golf. Now we definitely don't want to do that, do we? Here is how successfully marketing a product works (in a nutshell).

1. Find your product.
2. Use market research to find who will purchase your product (your target audience).
3. Film your commercial with a style that appeals your target audience.
4. Purchase airtime during TV shows that (a large number of) your target audience watches, and air the commercial.

So step 1 is pretty easy. Usually a company will approach you (when I say you, I mean a marketing company such as Adelpia) with a product, or in our case you will be creating a product. Then comes step 2. Market research? It's a lot easier than it sounds. A target audience consists of several different demographics, based on age, sex, nationality, and what they have the potential to purchase. To simplify the process we will just deal with age

groups. The following table will help you decide who to market your product too, as well as what style your commercial should adhere too. A sixteen year old skateboarder is going to want to see some hip and quick cuts, where a business executive will appreciate a classy slow moving and witty commercial.

Target Audience Table

| Age | Interests | Commercial Style |
|-------|---|---|
| 1-5 | None. Diaper Commercials, No-Spill cups are all aired during shows such as Barney, and targeted to mothers with children in this demographic. | Lots and lots of cute babies, targeted to hit the sympathy cord within parents. |
| 6-11 | The Barbie & Power Ranger phase. The products purchased are always inexpensive and highly desirable. Think Beanie Babies, Tamagotchi, and Tickle-Me-Elmo. With proper advertising you can turn your product into something no kid can live without. | Perhaps this is one time where a Power-Zoom is acceptable. Show lots of "cool" kids playing with the toys, rendering them a "must have" item. |
| 12-17 | This is a growth period, and is where advertisers get a bad name. Most commercials market out of fear in this category, think pimple cream and hair gel. Reality TV, MTV, etc. | Fast cuts, showing peers being "cool", popularity is key. |
| 18-26 | This is by far the largest target audience. At this age people are becoming independent, making their own money and making buying decisions on their own intuition. A lot fits into this category, from toothpaste to alcohol. | Explosions. Girls in Bikinis'. Guys with no Shirts. Think any Vin Desil movie. SEX SELLS! Comedy also does well here. |
| 27-49 | Now individuals are making larger buying decisions such as expensive car's, house insurance, etc. Marketing on sitcoms would be a good bet. | Show families in danger. Gets them every time. |
| 50 | I hate to say it but life insurance is big, as is medicine. Golf, Fishing Channel, and News are all winners. | Slow pacing, smiling elders, very open fields for some reason score. |

More channel specific demographic information is available at:
 (<http://www.adelphianortheast.com/new%20networks.htm>)

Lets get filming!

Now that you know exactly who it is you are trying to reach, all that's left is to write, storyboard, film, and edit! You can use all of the rules and techniques that we have learned in class, but the visual structure of a commercial varies considerably from a film. Instead of telling a story we are advertising a product, even if there is a story, it is only aiding the use of a product. Two things that sell a product like no other are fear and humor.

Fear vs. Humor Table

| Fear | Humor |
|---|---|
| We all strive to live a safe life. Fear, makes us uneasy and we will undoubtedly do everything in our power to reverse that fear. Just look at the war on terror, people like to be secure. Everyone has seen commercials for home security systems, criminals are always infiltrating our suburban way of life, ohh the horror! Quick get the phone, don't wait another second. You are too fat, get 6 Second Abs [®] ASAP. | Unlike commercials that advertise fear, ads with humor don't really have the viewer jumping for the phones, or even desiring a product. Instead, funny advertisements get stuck in your head. The "WAZZUP!" Budweiser ads never told us how great the beer was, but everyone knows what they were advertising. This is called product recognition, and if pulled off successfully can be even more effective than using fear. |

Format

Usually commercials are shot as :60 second ads and then edited down to :30 seconds, depending on ad slots (program schedules). Most always they start black and end black, usually fading in and out. This gives a smooth bridge into the next commercial in line. Because your time limit is so short, always remember that content is king. No one wants to see someone talking about a product in a :60 second shot. How is your commercial going to stand out above the rest? If your piece is dramatic, it is a good idea to immediately show a something that shocks the audience as a hook, then explain what the shocker was all about, via your product. Comedy is incredibly open ended, while it can take on the shocker format, humorous commercials also often take on experimental approaches, usually only featuring the product in the very end. This format almost tricks you into thinking that you are not watching a commercial, but rather another piece of programming.

But really, why a commercial?

I think the best thing about commercials is the true open format that it presents. Sure, it doesn't let you explore character emotions, or tell a thought provoking story, but it does let you explore incredibly experimental techniques for later use in other projects (let us not forget that bullet-time first appeared in a Gap commercial). It also gets your mind spending an incredible amount of time on every shot, as you can super stylize things beyond belief due to short length. If you choose to create a commercial do so with an incredibly keen eye, storyboard everything and spend 50 times as much as you usually would on every shot. Consider this a learning experience, and heck, who knows you may actually like it!?