FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: A MODEL FOR TEACHING BEGINNING ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a practical method for integrating theory into a beginning advertising course. It briefly reviews other teaching methods, noting the movement toward increasing concern with management and theory. Expanding on the basic logic of Colley's DAGMAR model, it proposes a planning model through which advertising-related decisions can be linked in a hierarchical chain of objectives. This model serves as the basic organizing principle of the course. The paper includes sample planning documents used in an actual introductory advertising course.

INTRODUCTION

The organization of popular advertising texts suggest that introductory advertising courses are taught according to a descriptive model. That is, they seek to describe various facets of advertising and explain how they operate in society. Kleppner's classic text has set the tone, focusing our attention on description of advertising decisions rather than the other aspects of the way advertising operates [3].

Few of us would quarrel with the decision-oriented approach. Nevertheless, with the maturation of advertising as a discipline, many of us have begun to search for a less simplistic, more theory-oriented approach. We would like our courses to teach students how to make the decisions that older texts simply describe -- how to formulate advertising strategy, how to make media decisions, how to set advertising budgets, and so forth.

Perhaps the most significant break through in service of this theory-based decision-making approach was Colley's DAGMAR [2]. Colley suggested that advertising decision making involves a hierarchical chain of theory. At the corporate level, the theory seeks to explain how a company might achieve its corporate objective of profit. The theory suggests that this may be done by selling goods. Selling goods then becomes the marketing objective. Marketing theory suggest that the company might sell goods by stimulating brand preference. Thus, brand preference becomes an advertising objective. Colley's book elaborates on his basic hierarchical planning model by suggesting specific types of marketing and advertising objectives a company might pursue.

Most advertising educators address Colley's approach in their classes, but few have fully integrated his theory-based planning model into their courses. There are two reasons for this:

First, Colley's book was written for the trade. It did not have the breadth or depth of coverage necessary for adoption as the text in a full-scale advertising course. Thus, we have not had a convenient guide for bridging the gap between the planning model and other topics that need to be covered -

Second, Colley's model assumed that consumer buying behavior was based on a hierarchy of effects that is at best a simplistic view of how consumers make decisions. We have had trouble integrating a deeper understanding of consumer behavior into Colley's hierarchical model.

Aaker and Myers have tried to overcome this problem with what they term DAGMAR MOD II [1]. DAGMAR MOD II accommodated different models of the communication process, depending on the situation. It also emphasized more analytical models, incorporating more precise and measurable constructs.

While the concept of DAGMAR MOD II could accommodate any model of communications, in practice, Aaker and Myers drew heavily on McGuire's comprehensive information-processing model of advertising effectiveness [5]. McGuire's model links various stages of information processing and a broader range of communications and consumer behavior theory [4].

Ray [6] pursued the broader approach suggested by DAGMAR MOD II by identifying several different kinds of information processing hierarchies, noting the kinds of situations in which each one might be valid.

Foote, Cone, & Belding (FCB) has used this approach to develop an actual advertising planning model (the "FCB model") that helps identify the kind of communications strategy most likely to work in any given advertising situation [7].

While the FCB model represents major conceptual breakthrough, it is a proprietary model and very little has been said about it in the academic literature. It is not available in a form that enables advertising educators to incorporate it into their courses.

What follows is a brief description of an introductory advertising course that seeks to overcome the problems we have just discussed. It uses a DAGMAR-like model to develop a series of applied advertising assignments, thus linking theory and practice. The assignments complement the more general descriptive material students may read on their own in any number of popular text books. Since most of these texts are both comprehensive and readable, class lectures can be devoted to the development and use of the planning model in completing class assignments.

THE PLANNING MODEL

Exhibit 1 illustrates the planning model. Following Colley's lead, the model assumes that the corporate objective is to increase profit. Theory suggests that the company might use marketing to do this by increasing margins or by increasing the quantity sold.

In second stage, increased margins or volume become the objective. Marketing strategy makes high margins possible by creating differential advantage through market segmentation or product differentiation. It increases the quantity sold in one of three ways: (1) by bringing people into the market, (2) by increasing product usage, or (3) by winning market share.

Note that the strategy at one level provides the objective for the next. This was the key to Colley's integration of theory and practice in his model. Every strategy calls for another level of theory to implement it, where theory establishes the causal relationship between the strategic variables and the objectives they are used to achieve. Unfortunately, Colley's model stopped with advertising objectives. But advertising objectives are where we would like the real substance of our course to begin.
As we can see in exhibit 1, the model suggested in this paper continues through two more levels of theory. The distinguishing characteristic of advertising theory is that it addresses the way people think, while marketing strategy addresses the way they behave.

The advertising theory upon which the planning model is based assumes that consumers operate according to a type of Psychological program. Their information-processing activities are governed by a set of instructions that is determined by the nature of the program that is operating at any given time. We commonly refer to this as consumer's frame of mind. According to the model, advertising strategy has four elements:

1. **Frame of mind.** What frame of mind must an ad evoke in order to ensure that consumers process the message properly?

2. **Evoked set.** What target behavior would we like consumers to consider engaging in as a result of the ad?

3. **Evaluative criteria.** What criteria should the ad encourage consumers to use as a basis for deciding whether to engage in the target behavior once it is in their evoked set?

4. **Target perceptions.** What consequences should consumers perceive as coming from the target behavior after being exposed to the ad?

These four strategic elements are very broad, thus making the planning system applicable to many different kinds of advertising. In practice, target behaviors are generally a product or brand, implicitly linked to product purchase, trial or usage. Evaluative criteria and target perceptions are the benefit preferences and perceptions we would expect to find in a standard "joint-space" positioning analysis. That is, preferences are what people want, and perceptions are what they think they are getting from a product. Thus, the only difference between the model and a conventional advertising strategy model are the ideas that we can influence the way people process an ad by deciding what frame of mind we want to evoke at the outset of advertising exposure and that we should be very specific about the kind of behavior the ad is designed to promote.

While advertising strategy addresses the mental changes we propose to stimulate through advertising, creative strategy addresses the persuasive techniques the advertising uses. Thus, creative strategy draws upon consumer behavior and persuasion theory to evoke the desired frame of mind, to bring the target behavior into the evoked set, to encourage use of the desired evaluative criteria, and to promote a belief that the target product or behavior offers the desired benefits.

The actual creative strategies tend to vary along two dimensions, as illustrated in exhibit 2. First, the persuasive style varies between logical and associative, depending on whether the advertising task is to involve consumers in a problem-solving or a problem-finding type of mental activity. Problem-solving involves considered choices aimed at solving a specific consumer problem (a "left-brain" type of activity). Problem-finding involves a process of arousal in which symbols are used to focus consumer's attention on a particular need -- a woman in a bikini being admired by men to remind women of the need to be attractive, for instance.

Second, the persuasive style will vary in the seriousness of its tone, depending on how ego-involved consumers are likely to become with the advertising message.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the planning model shown in Exhibit 1 provides the core theory around which a course can be structured. The next section will discuss the actual structure of such a course.

### STRUCTURING A COURSE

The course is structured around a "thread" case and seven assignments. I change the actual case each quarter to keep students from passing "solutions" from one class to the next. In this paper, I will use the Apple Macintosh computer as an illustrative case.

#### Assignment 1: Market Analysis

I provide students with several pages of written material regarding the marketing situation. In addition, I suggest that students visit stores, talk to salespeople, review advertisements, and otherwise prepare themselves for a marketing analysis. The analysis itself consists of short answers to the following:

1. **Usage Analysis.** Why do people use the product? How do they use it? What needs does the product serve? Do style different people use the product for different reasons? If so, how are the people different? What needs are being served for each
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I introduce the marketing strategy exercise in class with a brief discussion of several different cases. I provide the students with sample strategy statements for each example so that they have several models against which to test their understanding of the strategy concepts.

Exhibit 3 provides a sample marketing strategy statement for the Macintosh computer case.

Assignment 3: Advertising Strategy Exercise

The third assignment requires students to write a formal statement of advertising strategy. The exercise follows directly from planning model shown in Exhibit 1. A week before the assignment is due, I provide students with a marketing strategy statement (Exhibit 3). I instruct them to develop several alternative advertising strategies to implement the recommended marketing strategy.

We have already discussed the basic components of advertising strategy. The strategy statement contains six elements:

1. Advertising Objectives. This section translates the marketing strategy into a general statement of advertising objectives. In practice, there is a gap in the translation. While marketing strategy might be to increase market share in a given market, advertising objectives might be to increase brand preference. This is because other elements of the marketing and promotional mix are also working to implement marketing strategy. Advertising is usually given one portion of the overall marketing task.

2. Strategy Names: The names should represent the essence of the strategy. Students should include a brief description highlighting the strategy’s key elements.

3. Key Benefit and Positioning: The key benefit and position represent the basis for selling the product and the way the product is to be

Assignment 2: Marketing Strategy Exercise

The second assignment requires students to write a formal statement of marketing strategy. The statement includes four parts:

1. Problem/Situation: This section consists of a brief statement indicating the major marketing problem, or challenge the company faces. It should consider the nature of the company’s objectives, the product, the market, the competition, and so forth. While this portion of the statement will typically contain key background information, its formal role is to establish the company’s marketing objectives.

2. Alternatives: This section indicates what alternative strategies the company should consider. Students should list only the three or four most plausible alternatives.

3. Solution: This section indicates which of the alternatives the company should select. It then explains the major steps the students propose for implementing the strategy.

4. Rationale: This sections explain why the students selected the strategy they did. Their rationale should provide a logical reason for accepting one strategy and rejecting the others.

The purpose of this assignment is threefold: First, it gets students into the case. When they have finished, they usually have a fairly good grasp of the problem. Second, it teaches them some specific approaches to market analysis. Third, it forces them to grapple with the concept of competitive strategy. It sensitizes them to the concept of strategy in general, thus preparing them for the remaining assignments.

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Exhibit 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising Strategy Statement for Apple Macintosh Computer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advertising Objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 1: Anyone can use computers to get a Macintosh computer * Easy to use, anyone can use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3: New tool — a powerful, simple computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Benefits and Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Simple, powerful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Simple, powerful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Powerful, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task: Position: Macintosh as a powerful computer that is as easy to use, anyone can use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Element 1: Frame of Mind</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Frame of mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Frame of mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Frame of mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a mental model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a mental model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a mental model</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Element 2: Target Behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Target behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Target behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Target behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Stimulate people to consider using Macintosh</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task: Stimulate people to consider using Macintosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Element 3: Competitive Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Competitor position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Competitor position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus: Competitor position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a competitive position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a competitive position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task: Create a competitive position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages and Disadvantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages: Appeals to the many people who feel they should be using a computer but who are not Macintosh users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages: Addresses the positive needs of the users that motivate computer usage over other software and that is as simple to use as a typewriter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages: Appeals to the many people who feel they should be using a computer but who are not Macintosh users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages: Hard to convince many people that Macintosh is as simple to use as a typewriter and that is as simple to use as a computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Strategic Elements.** Each strategic element should contain two kinds of information:

   * The basic focus of the strategy draws on the four components of advertising strategy discussed earlier in the paper: (1) the frame of mind the advertising is supposed to evoke; (2) the target behavior the advertising is supposed to place in consumers' evoked set; (3) the evaluative criteria; and (4) the target perceptions.

   * The major advertising tasks that must be carried out in order to implement the strategy.

5. **Advantages and Disadvantages.** This section should summarize the major strengths and weaknesses of each strategy alternative.

6. **Recommendations and Rationale.** This section should indicate which strategy the students recommend and why.

Exhibit 4 illustrates how these guidelines might be incorporated into an advertising strategy statement for the Macintosh computer. Note that the individual strategies might vary on any one or more of several points. Developing a full statement of several alternative strategies helps students understand the essence of the strategy they actually choose. The key elements of a strategy will usually emerge in the discussion of advantages and disadvantages.

As with the marketing strategy statement, I introduce students to advertising strategy by discussing a number of cases, providing them with sample advertising strategy statements for each.

Assignment #4: Creative Strategy Exercise

The fourth assignment requires students to write a formal statement of creative strategy. Again, the exercise follows directly from the planning model shown in exhibit 1. A week before the creative strategy assignment is due, I provide students with an advertising strategy statement (exhibit 4). I instruct them to develop a creative strategy statement to implement the recommended advertising strategy.

In the case of popular and current products such as Macintosh, students are usually very much aware of the product’s advertising. As a result, I will usually recommend a different strategy than the company is currently using. In exhibit 4, for instance, Apple chose to use the “Anyone can use it” strategy. I required students to implement the “New tool” strategy.

The creative strategy statement provides the major working document from which copywriters and art directors will work. Therefore, it contains more detail than would otherwise be needed for a simple creative strategy. It includes seven sections:

1. **Advertising Objectives.** This section provides a statement of the specific mental activities the advertising should stimulate in consumers.

2. **Target Market Description.** This provides demographics, psychographics, product usage, or other descriptive information to help copywriters visualize the kind of person they are writing to.

3. **Competitive Position.** This section provides an elaboration of the “positioning” portion of the advertising strategy statement. It should give the copywriter a clear idea of the category in which the product will be competing, how consumers will think about the product, what products it will be compared to, and/or what products it will replace.

4. **Promise.** This section should reflect the “key benefit” from the advertising strategy statement. As a matter of form, however, it should be stated
as a promise. Verbally or non-verbally, explicitly or implicitly, advertising should promise consumers that they will receive some benefit if they do what the ad suggests.

5. Support. Support provides facts, figures, and/or secondary attributes or benefits to support the promise. As a rule, logical creative strategies will require considerable support while associative strategies will require little if any.

6. Creative Objectives and Strategy. Creative objectives are provided by the tasks outlined in the advertising strategy statement. Thus, there will be four creative objectives. Note that the advertising must be simple, generally focusing on a single idea. Like great art, however, great advertising can communicate on several different levels at once. This section of the creative strategy statement is designed to capture the subtle nuances of the creative strategy on paper.

7. General Notes on Strategy. This section contains any special considerations copywriters should bear in mind when developing an actual ad. For instance, it gives the strategist an opportunity to elaborate on the different levels of communication implicit in the creative strategy. It also provides a means of explaining threads that should connect a single ad to other ads in the same campaign.

Exhibit 5 illustrates how these guidelines might be incorporated into a creative strategy statement for the Macintosh computer.

Assignment #5: Creative Execution Assignment

The fifth assignment requires students to execute a creative strategy in two different media. This puts them to the actual test of integrating theory with practice. Strategy is an abstraction, but this assignment requires the actual layout and copy of an ad.

Assignment #6: Media Assignment

The sixth assignment is built around the simple notion of media cost efficiency. Using media exposure, cost, and exposure effectiveness data that I provide for product users (owners of personal or home computers, in our example), the assignment asks students to answer a series of questions regarding alternative media plans.

Assignment #7: Budget Assignment

In preparation for the seventh and last assignment, we discuss the assumptions behind different budgeting models. The students are given data and asked to prepare actual budgets according to the various models.

REFERENCES