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Making an Impact at the Intersection
of Design, Advertising and Strategy

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WITHIN THE MARKETING INDUSTRY, design and advertising can be treated like oil and water. While the practices are inherently linked, certain marketers and brands do not use them together to their full potential.

In reality, design and advertising share many of the same strategic objectives when it comes to building impactful brands. In that sense, they are more like salt and sugar, as both must be brought together in the marketing mix to create meaningful brands.

In the spirit of borderless creativity, the practices of design, advertising and strategy should be more integrated. The same strategic goals that we aim to achieve through advertising campaigns and tactics can also be addressed by design, allowing us to target objectives from different angles.

At this intersection between design, advertising and strategy, we can double down on how we solve problems, address our strategic objectives, and build meaningful brands.

Before we explore the shared principles and objectives of design and advertising,

we must expand our perceptions of what design can do. While design is ultimately guided by aesthetic principles that can make things more visually appealing, it is also incredibly strategic in nature. It has the power to directly shape the way people think, feel and act.

In her book *Joyful*, designer Ingrid Fetell Lee shines a light on how people tend to underestimate the power that design has on our state of being. We're often taught that emotional states, like joy or calm, come from within. But Fetell Lee explains that design plays an important role in our mental states, too. The design of things *around* us can elicit feelings and responses *within* us.

One of the best examples of this phenomenon is found in the design of physical spaces. Every design element, from the color of the walls, to the shape of the furniture, to the lighting, has a direct impact on how we feel, act, and respond

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to that space. Like physical spaces, design can have the same impact on brands. The way that consumers think, feel and act toward a brand can be influenced by the brand's visual language. In this regard, design is about far more than making a product or package aesthetically pleasing. When applied with intention, it can directly address certain strategic objectives.

In the advertising industry, we aim to understand people so that we can influence their perceptions and actions. So much of our effort is spent translating strategy into big creative ideas, which we hope will make consumers think differently about a brand. These ideas generate awareness, shape our perceptions, and make brands top of mind. They are overt and speak to the conscious part of our brain.

Design, on the other hand, is a bit more subtle and taps into our subconscious. It innately changes the way that someone

interacts with a brand. When design becomes a bigger, more integrated part of our marketing efforts, it can achieve the same goals in a more direct, subconscious way, acting as the perfect counterpart to advertising.

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As marketers, we share a common set of beliefs about what marketing and advertising should do for brands. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that design can help achieve these same goals:

- get consumers' attention
- influence consumers at relevant moments along the customer journey
- appeal to the consumer with both emotion and logic
- ground everything in a solid brand strategy.

Get consumers' attention

Advertising is nothing without attention, which is typically achieved through a big idea; as David Ogilvy famously said: “unless your campaign contains a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night.” While big ideas are proven to drive business results, they are not the only way to garner attention. Distinctive design can make a product stand out in a sea of similar-looking competitors.

In recent years, design has been used as a competitive advantage for a slew of new direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands. The visual language of these brands is one of their main points of difference. Even in seemingly boring product categories like socks, razors or mattresses, these brands

use design to make their product feel unique and interesting. Conducting a visual competitive analysis allows us to derive strategic insights about the competition in the industry and inform ways to differentiate in the marketplace.

This can also help brands find organic attention. Oftentimes, DTC brands do not have the comparable media budgets to the well-established competitors in their industry. Unable to compete in budgets and paid impressions, they use design as their competitive advantage. Design becomes a tool for them to attract consumer attention — bringing a fresh identity to a “sea of sameness” industry.

CASE STUDY

Casper

Casper is a great example of using design as an attention-grabbing point of difference in a “tired” industry. Their idea of launching the brand with “one perfect mattress” pushed against people’s traditional experience of needing to test every mattress in the store to find the right one. Through a memorable campaign, Casper challenged consumer behavior by featuring a cast of delightfully unusual characters who all sleep soundly on a Casper mattress. The illustration-driven design approach

combined with an upbeat color palette was an immediate stand-out in the category and made other mattress brands seem “old” overnight.

Casper shows that if all else is held constant, the brand with the better design will be the one to grab attention, stand out from the pack, and maintain consumer engagement throughout their experience with the brand.

Influence people at key, relevant moments along the consumer journey

Marketers often develop a path to purchase, outlining the key moments where a brand needs to show up, the relevant messages it needs to communicate at those touchpoints, and the desired response they aim to elicit from consumers.

At every touchpoint, there is an opportunity for design to impact a consumer's

experience and help achieve a desired response. As they move along the path to purchase, consumers have a "momentum" that they either maintain or lose throughout their journey with a particular brand. If design is used to create a positive experience at every touchpoint, they will be more likely to maintain engagement with the brand.

EXAMPLE

The Path to Purchase



Because the path to purchase is not linear, design plays an important role as a consistent visual cue for the brand. Regardless if a consumer is seeing a brand via TV spot, an Instagram ad, on-shelf at the store, or as an e-comm banner ad,

a cohesive visual language backed by strong strategy increases the likelihood of a positive consumer response at each touchpoint, thus encouraging further momentum along the path the purchase.

Appeal to the consumer with both emotion and logic

Traditional advertising uses a mix of emotional storytelling and hard-hitting claims to appeal to the head and the heart of the consumer. Following similar principles, design inherently appeals to both our emotional and rational brains.

Good design taps into emotion by making people feel a certain way using elements like color, texture, form and typography to trigger specific emotions. A design that uses dark, saturated colors and sharp angles will make us feel differently than a

design that uses pastel colors and softened shapes.

Design also satiates our need for rational reasoning by making consumers feel justified in their decisions. Any claims, RTBs, or points of difference a brand may want to accentuate can be explicitly or implicitly communicated through design. Additionally, the design itself can even be a rational reason to buy.

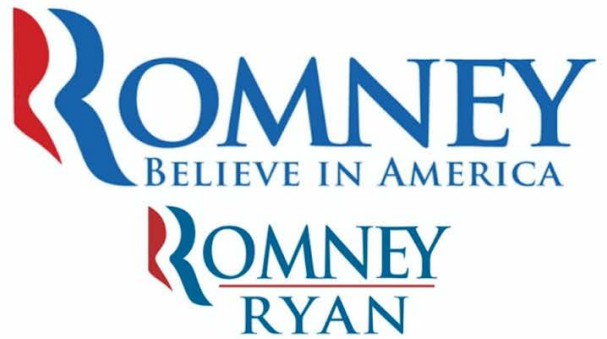
CASE STUDY 2012 U.S. Presidential Campaigns

Take the logos and brand assets of the 2012 presidential campaigns of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, for example. In the American political arena, no visual communications draw as much scrutiny as the logos of presidential candidates. They have the power to unite one's constituents behind a powerful symbol, or leave them inactive, uninspired, or worse — disaffected.

Obama's 2012 presidential campaign (itself an evolution of his 2008 campaign) is considered one of the best examples of political campaign design. Not only were the visuals well-crafted, but they were also informed by a powerful communication strategy that appealed to both the heads and hearts of American voters.

The icon was the hero of the campaign assets, an uppercase "O" that depicted a rising sun over a rolling field of red and white, symbolizing the dawn of a new day. Its form was inherently open and welcoming, inviting viewers to gaze upon the landscape and imagine a portal to a brighter future. The icon was also extremely adaptable—flexible enough to be inserted comfortably into words and recognizable enough to appear alone on buttons and other merchandise. The combination of emotional symbolism and adaptability contributed a great deal to the ultimate success and ubiquity of the campaign.

The design team, led by designer and brand strategist Sol Sender, also took great care in choosing typography that



was attractive, modern, and highly legible. They chose Gotham, a popular sans-serif typeface originally commissioned in 2000 as a “masculine, new, and fresh” font for GQ magazine. Sender’s design team commissioned an additional version of the font for the 2012 campaign that included slab-serifs for increased ownability and a more “working class” attitude. With its wide variety of weights and language capabilities, Gotham was able to be used universally throughout all campaign communications without becoming stale. This effectively unified everything it touched under one clear voice.

In contrast, Mitt Romney’s campaign design suffered in many ways. The

logo, namely the triple “R” for Romney, Ryan, and the Republican ticket, lacked much meaning outside the alliteration and American flag motif. It was also widely derided as resembling a squirt of toothpaste. The primary typeface choice, Trajan, was intended to represent tradition and heritage, but came across to many as old-fashioned and expected. His campaign communications also lacked consistent font use, contributing to an inconsistent look and tone of voice. However well Romney was able to appeal to his constituents’ logic and emotions using speeches and rallies, the weakness of his campaign design stood as a missed opportunity to appeal to them on a deeper level.

Ground everything in a sound strategy and brand identity

As the first step in any project, a strong strategy gives us direction on what we want to achieve and how to achieve it. For any campaign, TV ad, or social post, many hours of critical thinking go into setting the direction of the work. Naturally, some of this strategic thought is bound to get lost as it is translated into a creative idea. The insights that we generate are inspiration

for the big idea, but they do not come to life verbatim (nor should they!). Design, on the other hand, provides a more direct way to communicate the brand identity with a consumer. The choices we make in strategy, such as identifying how we want our brand to be perceived, can be communicated in a brand's visual identity.

EXAMPLE

Apple's consistency in identity

Apple is a common but powerful example of this. Their brand stands for thinking differently. They position themselves as the intuitive, approachable, yet deeply creative brand, and their design principles are strategically chosen to reflect this identity. Bold product shots, minimalist layouts, clean lines and typography, and bright pops of color all come together to create a striking identity that tells you something about who they are. Compare this visual

identity to that of their competitors, and their strategic differentiation becomes even clearer.

Again, advertising is still a crucial part of the mix to overtly communicate specific points of difference to consumers. And the power really comes when design is integrated among all brand touchpoints — the ads, the events, the retail space, the packaging.

SOURCES

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At Ogilvy, we believe that the impact lies at the intersection of advertising and design, backed by a strong brand strategy.

Because design and advertising address similar objectives from different angles, real impact comes from the intersection of the two. This allows us to create work that is both emotional and rational, conscious and subconscious, that generates awareness and implicitly shapes perceptions. In the spirit of borderless creativity, we aim to integrate these practices to create strong, meaningful, impactful brands.

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To learn more about how design thinking can help your brand make an impact please reach out to:

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