Advertising

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Art and Layout

Creativity in advertising encompasses both copywriting and art. Although the message is considered the province of the copywriter and the artwork the responsibility of the art director, frequently these two creative people work as a team in the preparation of advertisements.

In the initial stages of the development of an advertisement either the copywriter or the art director may visualize the advertisement. *Visualization* is the creation of an idea, the formation of a mental image which is then to be transferred into the illustration and layout. The copywriter may use rough sketches to develop his theme and to convey ideas to the artist. The artist, who is more skilled in the abilities to sketch and draw, may also visualize through a "thought" sketch, but he can provide a pictorial representation of this idea more easily than the copywriter.

Visualization is often confused with the terms *illustration* and *layout.* Visualization precedes both—it has been defined as "the process of forming a mental image, picture or representation of an object not before the eyes."[1] The visualizer, whether he is artist or copywriter, develops a concept of how an appeal may be presented most effectively. The layout is the physical arrangement of the elements in an advertisement so that this mental idea may be effectively presented. The picture portion of the layout is generally referred to as the illustration.

[1] Charles J. Dirksen and Arthur Kroeger, *Advertising Principles and Problems,* 3rd ed. (New York: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1968), p. 311.

Much of the creativity in advertising evolves from the process of visualization and the countless ways in which mental images can be made to represent ideas. A perusal of current advertising will quickly reveal the numerous variations with which one idea may be expressed. Impending danger is vividly and graphically presented by an onrushing train over an old trestle, a child retrieving a ball in a street crowded with traffic, a pedestrian walking down a dark empty street, or a flashing red light. Despite the vivid and artistic portrayals produced through visualization, effective advertising requires that these images be translated into the advertiser's message, which is concerned with the need or desire his product fulfills.

The layout is the plan or "architectural design" for the elements in an advertisement. The visualizer projects the idea but the layout man combines the elements which represent the idea into a single effective communication. The elements in layout generally include the headline, the illustration, the body text, the logotype, and other elements such as the subheadline, picture captions, trademarks, coupons, and seals of approval.

The functions of a layout are many. Some of the more important are:

1. It provides a working blending of the creative abilities of all personnel involved in the preparation of the advertisement.
2. It permits all interested parties, particularly the client, to see the advertisement before final steps are taken to put it in print.
3. It serves as a gauge to determine if all the materials that will go into the advertisement will fit into a given space.
4. It provides a blueprint to meet mechanical requirements of engravers, typographers, and others, as well as specifications for estimating costs.

TYPES OF LAYOUT

Various types of layout may be prepared. To some extent they represent stages in the layout process—a logical progression from the visualization to the completed layout. Frequently layout is begun with a *thumbnail sketch*. This small sketch is generally drawn in the experimental stage and prior to acceptance of the layout. As the name implies, these thumbnails are small, perhaps one-inch or two-inch squares, and they are not designed in detail. They are simple drawings that contain the basic elements of the advertisement, and many may be drawn before one is considered acceptable.

Rough

The rough or "visual" evolves from the acceptable thumbnail and although it is still somewhat sketchy, it begins to present more detail. The purpose of the rough is to convey the idea to agency personnel. It is the same size as the future advertisement, but the illustrations are roughed in, the headlines are lettered hastily, and the copy blocks are represented by horizontal parallel lines. Despite the hasty sketching and lack of detail, tonal values are clearly apparent, as are the spacing and design.

The rough is good for analysis and criticism by many interested parties and a number of roughs may be completed before the final one is accepted.

Comprehensive

The comprehensive resembles the final advertisement. The comprehensive usually appears on heavy paper or cardboard and provides further refinement to the rough. The artwork will be shown in approximately its final form or, when a photograph is used, proof of the photograph will be pasted into position. Headlines are carefully traced or reproduced by other means. Typed matter may be shown by ruled lines, and careful lettering is shown in its exact hue and value to indicate tone and color.

Comprehensives are expensive. They are frequently prepared for the agency by a free-lance artist or art studio and used to help the client judge the effect of the finished advertisement. Advertising agencies absorb the cost of finished layouts in commissions they receive from media, but the client is generally billed for the additional expense of a comprehensive layout. When a comprehensive is not prepared the finished layout, which is more carefully executed than the rough, is submitted to the client for approval.

"Mechanical" or "Pasteup"

The mechanical contains all the elements of the layout (art, lettering, and photography) pasted in precise position. It explains to the typographer the typefaces required and the position of the copy in the advertisement. If the artwork is made up of a number of separate pieces, it shows the advertisement as a unit before platemaking begins. It also may be used to get the client's approval.

REQUISITES OF AN EFFECTIVE LAYOUT

Fundamentally a good layout should attract attention and interest and should provide some control over the manner in which the adver-

tisement is read. The message to be communicated may be sincere, relevant, and important to the consumer, but unfortunately it is interspersed with many competitive messages so that the opportunity to be heard may depend on the effectiveness of the layout. In addition to attracting attention the most important requisites for an effective layout are: balance, movement, proportion, unity, clarity, simplicity, and emphasis.

Balance

Balance is a fundamental law in nature and its application to layout design formulates one of the basic principles of this process. Balance is a matter of weight distribution and in layout it is keyed to the *optical center* of an advertisement. The optical center is the point which the reader's eye designates as the center of an area. In an advertisement the reader accepts a vertical line which divides the area into right and left halves at the center, but the horizontal dividing line is between one-tenth and one-third the distance above the mathematical center.

In order to provide good artistic composition the elements in the layout must be in equilibrium. Equilibrium can be achieved through balance, and this process may be likened to the balancing of a seesaw. The optical center of the advertisement serves as the fulcrum or balancing point, and the elements may be balanced on both sides of this fulcrum through considerations of their size and tonal quality.

Formal Balance. The simplest way to insure formal balance between the elements to the right and left of the vertical line is to have all masses in the left duplicated in size, weight, and distance from the center, as those on the right. Formal balance imparts feelings of dignity, solidity, refinement, and reserve. It has been used for advertising that is institutional in character and suggests conservatism on the part of the advertiser. Its major deficiency is that it presents a static, lifeless, and somewhat unexciting appearance.

Informal Balance. Formal balance may be achieved through equilibrium such as that secured by placing two boys of equal weight the same distance from the fulcrum of a seesaw. For informal balance, consider two boys of unequal weight balanced on the seesaw; to insure equilibrium it is necessary to place the smaller boy far from the center and the larger boy closer to the fulcrum.

In informal balance the elements are balanced, but not evenly, due to different sizes and color contrast. This type of asymmetric balance requires care in order not to place the various elements so that they

This illustration achieves informal balance. The heaviest weights in the illustration are placed closer to the center, while the lightest weights are placed further from the center. (Courtesy Bozell & Jacobs, Inc.)

create a lopsided or topheavy appearance. A knowledge of a sense of the subject of composition can help create the feeling of symmetry in what is essentially asymmetric balance.

Informal balance presents a fresh, untraditional approach. It creates excitement, a sense of originality, forcefulness, and, to some extent, the element of surprise. Whereas formal balance may depend on the high interest value of the illustration to attract the reader, informal balance may attract attention through the design of the layout.

Movement

If an advertisement is to appear dynamic rather than static, it must contain some movement. Movement provides the directional flow for the advertisement, gives it the follow-through, and provides coherence. It guides the reader's eye from one element to another and makes sure he does not miss anything.

Motion in layout is generally from left to right and from top to bottom—the direction established through the reading habits of English-speaking people.[2] The natural visual flow should not be disturbed but the directional impetus should be to favor the elements to be stressed, while care should be taken not to direct the reader's eye out of the advertisement.

Gaze Motion.   Gaze motion is a form of movement where the direction in which people or animals look captures the attention of the reader. If someone is gazing at a unit in the layout, the natural tendency is for the reader to follow the direction of that gaze. Or if someone is looking directly out of the advertisement, the reader may stop to see who's staring.

Structural Motion.   The lines of direction and patterns of movement are incorporated by mechanical means in structural motion. The arrangement of the elements, shapes, and lines are subtle means of achieving structural motion. More obvious are the use of devices such as arrows and pointing fingers. Movement can also be achieved by building the layout in accordance with certain letters of the alphabet, e.g., S, J, C, V, Z, and O.

Proportion

Good layout offers a sense of proportion. Proportion is related to balance but is concerned primarily with the division of advertising space and on the emphasis to be accorded each element. Normally an element should be given space and position in the layout in proportion to its importance in the total advertisement. However, care should be taken to avoid the impression that any element stands alone. Proportion helps develop harmony and order and creates a pleasing impression.

White Space.   Effective use of white space can help to establish a sense of proportion. *White space* is defined as that part of the advertising space which is not occupied by any other elements (regardless

[2] William Longyear, *Advertising Layout* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1954), p. 14.

New Jersey Bell points out a wonderful gadget for reducing phone bills.

Your index finger.

Use it to dial all out-of-state station calls. And no matter what other state you call (except faraway Alaska and Hawaii), it will always cost less than if you had placed the call through an operator. Especially on week-nights and weekends when the savings are especially big.

For example. During weekend bargain-calling times*, a 3-minute, coast-to-coast station call costs $1.40 plus tax—if you use the services of an operator.

But the same call is reduced even more—way down to 70¢ plus tax—if you dial it yourself without the services of an operator.

So, remember to dial your own station calls without an operator. And fight inflation with just one finger.

*From 8 a.m. till 11 p.m. Saturdays, and from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. Sundays.

Ⓑ New Jersey Bell
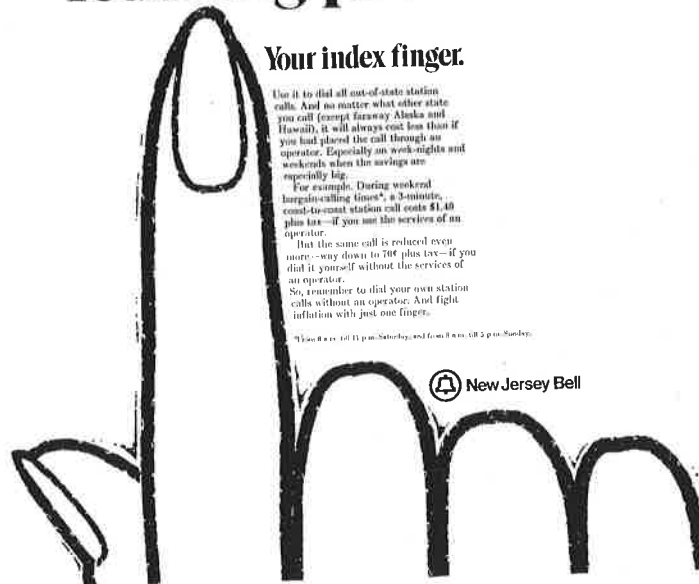
The pointing finger is used in this advertisement as a device for creating structural motion. (Courtesy Bozell & Jacobs, Inc.)

of the color of the advertising background). White space may be used to feature an important element. It helps to imply luxury and prestige and prevents a crowded appearance. White space may also be used to direct and control the reader's attention.

The faulty use of white space may cause "rivers of white" which create difficulty in viewing the advertisement as a whole and divide it into sections in an undesirable manner.

Unity

By keeping the units close enough together and by letting the larger amounts of white space be at the borders rather than at the center

of the advertisement, the layout can gain the effect of unified whole. This is the goal of the advertisement, for although it is made up of many elements, all of these should be welded into a compact composition. Unity is achieved by having the elements tie into one another, avoiding the appearance that the advertisement is divided into distinct sections. Unity is also developed through the advertising campaign by having the individual advertisements provide varying representations of the same theme.

Clarity

The good art director does not permit the layout to become too complicated and tricky. The advertisement should retain its clarity and be easy to read and easy to understand. The consumer tends to see the total image of an advertisement; thus it should not appear fussy, contrived, or confusing. Color contrasts, including tones of gray, should be strong enough to be easily decipherable, and the various units should be clear and easy to understand. Type size and design should be selected for ease of reading, and lines of type should be a comfortable reading length.

Simplicity

Too many units in an advertisement are distracting; therefore any elements that can be eliminated without destroying the message should be omitted. One way in which simplicity can be achieved is by combining the logotype, trademark, slogan, and company name into one compact group.

Emphasis

One of the basic functions of the layout is to attract attention. To stand out from the competition, the advertisement must present a lively and varied design. Emphasis helps avoid monotony and can be achieved by contrasts in size, shapes, and color, or the use of white space. Although varying degrees of emphasis may be given to different elements, one unit should dominate.

ILLUSTRATION

A major attention-getting device in an advertisement is the illustration. The headline is also accorded the bulk of this task, but gaining attention is best achieved when the headline and illustration are