

### 6.3 The art of noticing: splitting information in advertising communication

#### Objective

This exercise aims to analyze a visual message (a TV commercial, specifically) to identify how the splitting of information at different levels can improve the effectiveness of the communication. TV ads offer good empirical materials for this purpose. Let's use an iceberg metaphor to illustrate this point.

On one hand, the ad must convey an explicit, short, and clear message, e.g. through a slogan/tag line associated with the product's key feature. This is the immediately visible tip of the iceberg. On the other hand, the commercial contains a complex set of visual stimuli on which the top message is grounded. These visual stimuli include details and clues that create a system of symbolic and narrative references to help to reinforce the key message. In the iceberg metaphor, this information is embedded in the hidden layers. However, even if the viewer is only partly aware of these stimuli and how they contribute to the story the ad tells, our attention moves quite smoothly between the big picture and the lower-level stimuli in a well-done commercial. We have illustrated this way of using splitting in the chapter as movement between 'the whole and the small' as in the analysis of the Rembrandt's painting of the young artist in his studio (see chapter 6).

#### Instructions

Pick up a well-done TV commercial, e.g. an award winning one such as [Apple 1984 commercial by Ridley Scott](#), or just one that you like or that caught your attention

1. Watch the add a few times and then:
  - a. Identify the key explicit message.
  - b. List clues and stimuli (what you see and what you hear, anything that captures your attention) and identify feelings or suggestive ideas that the stimuli evoke.
  - c. Organize the list elements using the following tables to analyze the ad in detail based on 4 characteristics that make a TV ad great (Biteable, 2020) – an example is drafted regarding the Apple 1984 ad. The last row summarizes why the ad achieves storytelling coherence (or not).

	Stimuli	Evocation/suggestion
<b>Memorable</b>		
A well-done ad includes details that help us to remember it, (emotionally salient detail (odd, funny, touching), graphics, music, etc.)	Ominous music reminding heartbeat or a clanging machine. Young, energetic athlete in full contrast with the zombies in the audiences (woman, blond, maybe an athlete from the Soviet bloc - 1984 was an Olympic year - energetic,	Anxiety, oppression  Rebellion to dictatorship

	<p>wearing colours versus man, numbed, and grey).</p> <p>The big face of the dictator on the giant screen.</p> <p>The big smash and light at the end.</p> <p><i>1984</i> is a famous novel by George Orwell in which the world is enslaved to a dictator called the 'Big Brother'.</p>	<p>Reference to the 'Big Brother' IBM</p> <p>Disrupting the status quo.</p>
<p><b>Communicate the brand's value:</b> what is the key practical or symbolic feature the advertisers wanted to emphasize and why?</p>	<p>Breaking in a crowded and intimidating space.</p> <p>Youth.</p> <p>Colour of the main character versus the almost monochrome scene.</p>	<p>Rebellion, originality, swimming against the flow.</p> <p>Novelty, freshness</p> <p>mocking the grey conformism of the corporate computer world versus joyful technology.</p>
<p><b>Call to action:</b> effective ads come with a clear prompt to action to push viewers to do something specific.</p>	<p>Breaking the glass (ceiling?).</p> <p>Run, Move on.</p>	<p>Coming out.</p> <p>Dare to try.</p> <p>Make a statement.</p> <p>Smash the prejudices and the dominant point of view.</p>
<p><b>Storytelling coherence</b></p>	<p>The ad depicts a world that is dominated by conformism and a lack of freedom (the references to the Soviet bloc are quite clear), Apple positions itself as a vital, energetic force liberating humanity from this nightmare and inviting people to dare to rebel against the system.</p> <p>Accordingly, the story is totally metaphoric with no reference whatsoever to the actual product (computer).</p>	

## References

Biteable (2020), The best commercial ads of all time, ever, <https://biteable.com/blog/best-commercials/>