

### 7.3 The art of noticing: the power of narrative centres

#### Objectives

This exercise shows how the power of the centre is the basis of every persuasive message. The centre manifests itself as the foundational claim around which a rhetorical strategy can be built.

#### Background

Commercials, video news and other types of short movies posted on social media such as Tik Tok or Instagram tend to last only a few seconds. Their message must have immediate impact. Therefore, the video maker cannot count on the observer's rational analysis, which requires more time than the short video. Thus, the message is deliberately built to evoke a quicker emotional reaction in the recipient.

The centre does not manifest as an explicit presence, but it results from an emotional process of understanding. Each construction element is intended to help the observer's attention converge towards a focal point.

For this exercise, let's consider a video ad. Advertising messages are built around a central claim and leverage visual and auditory resources such as images, duration of the scenes, speed, framing, cuts, noises, music, lights, contrasts, etc., to achieve their communication goal. Their objective is to convey the message emotionally by evoking experiences, memories, associations, and values that help reinforce the key claim.

Consider the following Mini car commercial:



Fig. 7.3a -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUxlWrQYmj4>

We can describe our reactions using the following table through three dimensions:

- Visual Experience: the first dimension refers to the immediate visual elements present in the commercial that strike your attention: people, situations, actions, movements, words, music, colours, etc.;

- Emotional Experience: the second dimension refers to the emotions evoked by the visual elements;
- Reflection: the third dimension pertains to our ability to understand and articulate what we think is the ad’s key message and underlying narrative.

The following table applies this framework to the analysis of the mini ad.

<b>Visual Experience: Perceptions</b>	
People and objects in the foreground:	Minis and car passengers.
People and objects in the background:	Urban landscape and natural landscapes to suggest different uses of the car.
Situations:	Different driving situations including urban driving, off-road driving, and cruising.
Actions:	Cars multiply their selves, merge, adapt to the challenges of the route, fly; expressions of joy, wonder, carefreeness.
Visual dynamics:	Fast fluid, rapid change of sequences.
Music, sounds, words:	Music to emphasize the fluidity of the action.
The colours, the contrasts:	The red of the Mini is the centre of attention.
<b>Emotional Experience: Feelings</b>	
Speed, Metamorphosis, Adaptation, Surprise, Magic	
<b>Reflection: Narrative and Claim</b>	
Narrative centre:	Driving a Mini is a magical experience, because the car understands your desires and the environment within which it moves, adapting to every situation.  Your Mini multiplies itself for you.
Central claim:	The daily journey can become magical thanks to Mini

**Instructions**

Select a car commercial video on the web (as in the example of fig.7.3a) and watch it carefully, then answer the following:

1. Identify salient visual elements that strike your attention such as
  - People and objects in the foreground and background
  - Situations
  - Actions, expressions
  - Foreground
  - Background
  - Dynamics (speed, pauses, sequences, etc.)
  - Music, sounds, words

- Colours, contrasts
2. Identify the emotions that these elements and their combination evoke in you.
  3. Reflect and construct what you think are the narrative centre and central claim of the spot.