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Precision Parking by Volkswagen: Advertisement Analysis



Incorporating humor within an advertising campaign is a great way to promote a brand and gather one's attention. When dealing with humorous content, companies should aim to be inoffensive and present relevant ideas and Volkswagen was able to successfully with their 2012 campaign. They aimed to promote one of their new features at the time, "the park assist". The linguistic message found within this specific ad is 'Precision Parking,' 'Park Assist by Volkswagen'. Overall, the print advertisement can be seen as simple, but I think it works in the brand's favor. Three goldfish and a pointy hedgehog are the main focus of the design, where the contrasting colors between the two animals allows them to stand out from each other and the dull gray background. The hedgehog represents a Volkswagen car, "parked" between three goldfish, which acts as other cars. The clever use of a prickly hedgehog carefully placed in-between the

goldfish in plastic bags, demonstrates the accuracy of 'Park Assist by Volkswagen' when parking in tight spaces.

The animals are aligned at an angle, where at first glance you might not think much of their placement, but as one becomes aware of the purpose behind the ad, you see they are metaphors for parked cars. This is where the non-coded iconic message can be identified, since the use of the animals may not be easily understood at first glance. Roland Barthes says in his book, *The Rhetoric of the Image*, "We need no other knowledge than what is involved in our perception," but I believe if one does not have any prior knowledge about cars or are not aware of the Volkswagen brand, they may not fully understand the metaphor that makes this advertisement.

According to Roland Barthes the coded iconic message is the story that the image portrays. This message is easily understood and the images represent a clear correlation between the two. Those who have experience with parking in tight spaces can relate to Volkswagen's message. They want viewers to know that their cars are highly effective in parking themselves in those tight spaces. The animals used are very different from each other, Volkswagen chose to represent themselves as a very unique animal, suggesting they aimed to grab the attention of anyone who may come across the advertisement and represent themselves as being the only one of its kind. The goldfish placed in fragile plastic bags, representing the other cars that surround tight parking spaces, hint at Volkswagen's awareness of the risks when parking so close to other vehicles. With this in mind, Volkswagen is consistent with demonstrating how dependable their parking assist feature is and shows that they do not only care about their own cars, but others drivers will come across while parking and driving. The goldfish that surround the hedgehog, are

noticeably facing different directions but are aligned in the center of their plastic bags, with small efforts as such Volkswagen's attention to detail allowed for a very creative and unified ad.

Placement plays a key role in the visual hierarchy of this ad, following the aligned animals, our eyes are drawn to the only text on the page on the bottom right. Short statements, 'Precision Parking' followed by 'Park Assist by Volkswagen' are placed in the corner along with the Volkswagen logo. Displayed in a sans serif font, the text does not distract viewers from the main image. The use of alliteration in their slogan allows for a memorable line, where the key message is easily understood. Despite its small placement, the message is clear and effective, informing viewers exactly what is being promoted - the accuracy of the new assist parking feature. The denotation behind the slogan is that Volkswagen cars are guaranteed to aid in parking. The statement evokes a sense of confidence for the company and encouragement towards buyers, to put their trust into the vehicle and Volkswagen brand. This be described as the connotative aspect of the ad.

The Volkswagen company was very successful when it came to promoting their parking assist feature. I think with great consideration for design principles, such as alignment and contrast, the use of a creative concept and direct message they were able to create a memorable ad. I personally was attracted to the ad due its use of animals and simple aesthetic. When I became fully aware of the metaphorical aspects I enjoyed the ad even more. Humor in advertising can often distract from the original message, but in this case it worked very well. All of these elements allowed for an organized and creative ad to be made, a concept all companies and designers should strive to achieve.