

# Three important processes behind effective TV ads

 By [John Laurence](#)

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At HeadSpace Neuromarketing we use EEG and eye tracking technology to measure a consumer's neural response to marketing communications. We believe in improving the effectiveness of an advertisement without damaging the creative concept behind it. Below are three common areas where we find television advertising can be made more effective.

## 1. Emotion

Most marketing and advertising people have accepted that evoking emotion is important in advertising. But this is like saying that sugar is an important ingredient in making a cake. Simply slapping emotion into an ad as strongly as possible doesn't cut it - the timing, strength and type of emotion are crucial to an ad's effectiveness. Arousing emotion in the right place and at the right time can significantly improve the messaging and branding of your ad.

## 2. Attention

The word "boredom" hardly existed 100 years ago whereas a recent study found that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnosis in the USA has risen 66% in the last 10 years. There may be a number of reasons for this, but the fact is that people these days expect their brains to be continuously stimulated and struggle to keep their attention focussed on a single point for any length of time.

People consequently don't just sit and stare at whatever's on the screen anymore - they make a quick (and usually subconscious) assessment and if it's not engaging and relevant to them, attention levels plummet. At HeadSpace we consistently see that people orient their attention to an ad for the first three seconds and if it's not working for them, that's it - you've lost them. Towards the end of the commercial people are quick to drop their attention once the action is over. You need to ensure that you have placed your brand under the spotlight of focal attention by the time they are signing off and preparing to re-orient themselves to whatever's next.

## 3. Memory

Some advertisers seem to think that their audiences have amazing memories and pack in as many messages that they can in an ad's meagre 30, 45 or 60 seconds. A creative director I know once used the analogy of catching a ball. Throw three balls at me and I'll catch none. Throw one ball and I'll probably get it. We see the same in our analyses - say three different things in an ad and you are putting too much strain on your audience's brain and all three will have lower memory encoding. Say (and show) one thing three times and memory encoding goes right up.

## The right ingredients

I'd like to say there are always simple rules to consistently ensure that you have all three of these issues covered, but to use the baking analogy again, it often depends on whether you are making a sponge or a carrot cake. It can be worth spending a bit of extra money making sure you have the right chef handling the ingredients.

## ABOUT JOHN LAURENCE

John is MD of HeadSpace Neuromarketing and is an experienced marketer with over 15 years in the marketing and advertising industry. As well as having worked in marketing research, he has headed the marketing divisions of two blue-chip global brands in South Africa and has developed strategy for several well-known brands. Contact him on tel +27(0)83 230 8764 or email [john@head-space.biz](mailto:john@head-space.biz).

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