



## A Pun Is Its Own Reword

By Max Sutherland

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What Aristotle called rhetoric, advertising calls creativity. The impact comes not just from what you communicate but *how* you communicate it.

As Leo Burnett once said: *"Make it simple. Make it memorable. Make it inviting to look at. Make it fun to read."*

Just as we appreciate a public speaker for a clever delivery, so ads that endear themselves to us have the potential to wash-over onto our feelings about the brand advertiser.

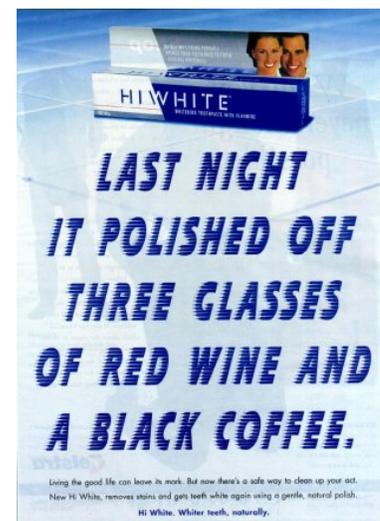
Look at the ad on this page for Prince - a spaghetti sauce. It utilizes a visual pun on the Mona Lisa to reinforce that Prince has two formulations – original and chunky. There is a cleverness in wrapping up an old message in a fresh way resulting in a colourful ad that consumers like, instead of a boring one they will ignore.

Such ads often use humorous word-play that can have the subtle effect of helping focus consumer attention. Consider straight print ads. We usually don't have to stop and think about them. We understand them with no effort, little attention - and often less *retention*. They elicit a meaning in our mind and having comprehended it, we have no reason to hesitate; we continue our scanning and move right along.

In contrast, look at the USA ad on this page, featuring the headline: *"Last night it polished off three glasses of red wine and a black coffee"*. When we see it is an ad for Hi White toothpaste, the play on words stops us momentarily, because the meaning of the headline instantly changes.

This brief 'interrupt' in the flow of our normal mental processing, has the effect of momentarily focusing our attention. It registers the ad just that little bit more. More than if it said: *'Hi White gets rid of red wine and coffee stains from teeth'*. (Yes the branding might be improved but that's another story.)

Take another example. The ad for UNICEF (next page) uses the headline: *'For 3 days the only shots in the Lebanon came from UNICEF'*. It is not until we notice in the picture that the child is being given an injection, that we make sense of it. A child being vaccinated forces our reinterpretation, to clarify that UNICEF was not firing weapons but vaccinating children.





## Conclusion

A brand's advertising is an intrinsic part of the brand personality and if we like the ads, all other things being equal, we have a greater chance of liking the brand.

The more that brands weigh equal, the more important is liking of a brand's advertising. Even a feather can tip the balance of brand choice when the alternative brands weigh equal.

*"Properly practiced creativity can make one ad do the work of ten."* William Bernbach.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Goel V. and Dolan R. J. (2001) The functional anatomy of humor: segregating cognitive and affective components. *Nature Neuroscience*. 4.