

Strategic Advertising Management

Oxford University Press, New York

Larry Percy, John Rossiter, & Richard Elliott (2001)

This review discusses Percy, Rossiter and Elliott's textbook *Strategic Advertising Management*. It comments first on the characteristics of the text before discussing its strengths and weaknesses.

Structure and Content of the Text

Designed for advanced students of marketing communications or advertising, this text is well-written and the chapters are thoughtfully structured. I particularly liked the strong decision-oriented framework the authors used as this helps students at all levels focus on the specific questions they need to address and how they might evaluate the options available.

The text comprises four sections, which move from a general overview of advertising and promotion through to a more specific consideration of various tactical issues. I found Section 1 of the text, the overview, rather disjointed. The first chapter, in particular, covers a diverse range of topics, from the meaning of advertising, through advertising on the Internet, to the social effects of advertising.

However, from Section 2, which explores planning, the text evolves clearly and introduces topics that are helpfully cross-referenced to subsequent chapters. This section begins by exploring a communication response sequence, and the behaviours that relate to this, before turning to examine the role of advertising within a wider marketing framework. The structure of this section is much stronger, and it provides a solid foundation on which to build. The logical movement from more general issues to detailed discussion of their constituent parts promotes understanding and leads students into a topic gradually, without first overwhelming them with detail.

Section 3, entitled "*Laying the Foundation*" pulls out key topics from the preceding section and explores their relevance and importance in detail. Decisions discussed in this section include identification of target audiences, consumer decision-making, positioning, and message and media strategies. Again, this section evolves clearly and provides a logical framework that would appeal to students. Like Section 2, this section also draws heavily on Rossiter and Percy's earlier work, and develops further several tools discussed in their

1987 and 1997 texts. The current book links together much of the first two authors' previous publications and provides an accessible synthesis of the advertising theories they have developed and advocated for some time.

Section 4 becomes even more specific and explores the practical applications of the frameworks and tools outlined previously. Beginning by exploring how consumers process messages, the section then considers creative and promotion tactics before concluding with a discussion of how various promotion elements can be integrated. The structure follows that of earlier sections, reinforcing the approach advocated by the authors and assisting students to trace themes from more conceptual discussions through to applied practical considerations.

Although I found Section 1's content and structure somewhat erratic, the remaining sections had a sound structure that focussed readers' attention on management decisions and how these might be addressed. From an educator's point of view, this structure would easily translate into lectures that move from wider theoretical issues to the specific decisions that followed on from these. From a student's point of view, the text is clearly written, and provides helpful summaries and cross-referencing that reinforce the approach adopted.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Text

For followers of the approach that Rossiter and Percy, in particular, have developed over the last 20 years, this text will be a great asset as it clearly documents their key theories, and how these have developed over time. As such, it extends and updates their earlier texts and provides a useful synthesis of their work. All three authors have impressive research records and the text draws heavily on their previous work. This is both a strength, since it helps establish an authoritative tone, yet also a weakness, since it tends to confine the research discussed to rather specific endeavours in a field that includes a much wider range of perspectives.

The text pays little attention to alternative approaches to advertising and promotion, some of which have now gained wide currency. For example, Ehrenberg's "Awareness-Trial-Reinforcement- (Nudging)" model is mentioned only briefly,

as are the views of Jones on advertising's effects. While the authors are perfectly entitled to advocate their preferred approach to these decisions, educators who wish to adopt a more wide-ranging perspective may find the text's content a little narrow.

Given that the text will be set for specialist papers that examine marketing communications in detail, I would have liked the authors to discuss a broader range of views so the text reflected the diversity of approaches that exist. Chapter 2 outlines many of these approaches, however, subsequent sections do not draw strongly on these frameworks, thus readers are left with summaries of alternative approaches, but little idea of how these might be applied.

A more eclectic approach would also explicitly require students to evaluate competing ideas and theories, and the evidence on which these are based. The danger of adopting a more prescriptive stance is that students view it as a recipe for success and uncritically rely on it. This is not to say that reliance on Percy, Rossiter and Elliott's prescription is ill-founded, but such reliance should occur after a thoughtful analysis of alternative approaches. Although, as noted, some reference is made to alternative approaches, the discussion of these is very brief – perhaps too brief to stimulate the skills in critical thinking that advanced students in marketing communications should be encouraged to develop.

Later sections of the text make good use of examples to illustrate the arguments advanced, particularly the chapters dealing with specific creative topics, which contain several thoughtful and very helpful illustrations of key ideas. However, the early chapters have fewer examples, and some mini-cases or specific examples could help to make the theoretical concepts more accessible. For example, an evaluation of an advertisement using the different approaches summarised in Chapter 2 could help clarify the differences between these perspectives.

I would also have liked to see stronger reference made to the empirical studies in advertising and promotion that have emerged. For example, Danaher's work in audience behaviour merits more detailed attention, as do Jones' arguments about frequency and media scheduling, and Lodish's response to Jones' claims. Similarly, no reference is made to Ehrenberg, Hammond and Goodhardt's work on price-related discounts, or to Gupta's decomposition of the promotion sales spike.

These suggestions may seem rather pedantic, as all texts need

to define limits, for the sake of both authors and readers. Perhaps one means of addressing this concern would be to provide more detailed references at the end of each chapter. While some chapters do contain several references, a number have comparatively few suggestions for extended or additional reading. Although some authors are listed in the Index, there is no overall bibliography and, from the point of view of students, further details of source material would provide helpful starting points for assignments requiring research beyond the text.

Each chapter is linked to at least one case available from a database held on the Institute for Practitioners in Advertising website. However, according to the information I received, the cases are not freely accessible and cost £20 to obtain, adding considerably to the overall cost of the text. Although web-based examples can be quickly and easily updated, thus maintaining the currency of the text without the need for revised editions, these examples must be available at no or little additional cost if they are to assist academics or their students.

Each chapter also concludes with a series of short review questions. For the most part, these are quite descriptive questions, checking recall of key concepts but not promoting deeper analysis of these or competing ideas. I would have liked to see questions that prompted more debate, and that could be used as the basis of class exercises or discussions. It is possible that the cases suggested for each chapter would have served such a purpose, but if the information I received is correct, I think the cost may deter some educators from subscribing to these.

Overall, this text is well-written and generally well-structured. Its format is clear and logical and it is likely to appeal both to educators and students since it offers a clearly developed prescriptive approach to advertising and promotion decisions. However, paradoxically, the strong emphasis on the framework provided is both the key strength and yet a weakness of this text. Educators and students looking for answers will be well satisfied with what this text offers them; however, educators looking to raise questions and stimulate debate may wish that the text incorporated a wider range of perspectives.

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Strategic Advertising Management: A Clarification

Oxford University Press, New York

Larry Percy, John Rossiter & Richard Elliott (2001)

A Clarification by John Rossiter

I would like to clarify what seems to be a mis-impression about Percy, Rossiter & Elliott's *Strategic Advertising Management*, generated by its review in AMJ (Hoek 2001). This book is not the new edition of Rossiter & Percy's 1997 textbook *Advertising Communications & Promotion Management*.

The new Percy et al. textbook is intended as a simpler, shorter (288 vs. 640 pages) and lower-level alternative to the main book. Indeed, its informal working title was "R & P Lite". The book is positioned as a shorter and deliberately less scholarly text for short executive courses or simpler undergraduate courses in advertising management.

Lecturers, and also managers, requiring a more advanced

approach would be better advised to stay with the Rossiter & Percy (1997) book. The next edition of that book will probably be forthcoming in late 2002.

References

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