

A SIMPLE EXPOSITION OF
THE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY
IN THEIR RELATION TO
SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING

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BOSTON

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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THE AUTHOR RESPECTFULLY DEDICATES THIS VOLUME TO THAT
INCREASING NUMBER OF AMERICAN BUSINESS MEN WHO
SUCCESSFULLY APPLY SCIENCE WHERE THEIR PREDECESSORS
WERE CONFINED TO CuSTOM.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Some good "doctoring" was done when men "picked up" their knowledge of medicine from their practice. To-day the state laws require that every physician shall

have a basis of theory for his practical knowledge. He must know the exact chemical constituents of the drugs used. He must know the anatomy and the physiology of the human organism. He must be a theoretical man before he can be a practical one. If the laws did not prohibit it, he might pick up a good deal in actual experience and might do a good deal of excellent work. The state laws, however, will not allow us to run chances with such people.

We would not call upon an architect to construct a modern office building unless he knew something of the theory of architecture. We would not call upon a lawyer to defend us before the courts unless he knew something of the theory of law. Some states audacities require teachers to pass examinations on the theory of teaching before they are allowed to give instruction.

In this day and generation we are not afraid of theories, systems, ideals, and imagination. What we do avoid is chance, luck, haphazard undertakings, parrot or rule-of-thumb action, and the like. We may be willing to decide on unimportant things by instinct or by the flipping of a coin, but when it comes to the serious

things
of life we want to know that we are trusting to something more than mere chance.

Advertising is a serious thing with the business man

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of to-day. It is estimated that the business men of the United States are spending \$800,000,000 a year in printed forms of advertising. Furthermore one authority claims that seventy-five per cent, of all this is unprofitable. Every business man is anxious that no part of these unprofitable advertisements shall fall to his lot. The enormity of the expense, the keenness of competition, and the great liability of failure have awakened the advertising world to the pressing need for some basis of assurance in its hazardous undertakings.

I have attempted to read broadly on the subject of advertising ; I have taken an active part in various kinds of advertising; I have been in intimate contact with manufacturers, salesmen, publishers, professional advertisers, etc., and in all that I have read, and in all my conversations, I have never seen or heard any reference to anything except psychology which could furnish a stable foundation for a theory of advertising. Nothing else is ever suggested as a possibility. Ordinarily the business man does not realize that he means psychology when he says that he "must know his customers' wants - what will catch their attention, what will impress them and lead them to buy," etc. In all these expressions he is saying that he must be a psychologist. He is talking about the minds of his customers, and psychology is nothing but a stubborn and systematic attempt to understand and explain the workings of the minds of these very people. In *Printers' Ink* for October, 1895, appeared the following editorial :

Probably when we are a little more enlightened, the advertising writer, like the teacher, will study psychology.

For,
however diverse their occupation may at first sight
appear, the
advertising writer and the teacher have one great
object in
common - to influence the human mind. The teacher has a

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scientific foundation for Ms work in that direction,
but the
advertising writer is really also a psychologist. Human
nature
is a great factor in advertising success, and he who
writes
advertisements without reference to it is apt to find
that he
has reckoned without his host.

In Publicity[^] March, 1901, appeared an article which
is even more suggestive than the editorial in Printers[^]
Ink. The following is a quotation from that article :

The time is not far away when the advertising writer
will
find out the inestimable benefits of a knowledge of
psychology.
The preparation of copy has usually followed the
instincts
rather than the analytical functions. An advertisement
has
been written to describe the articles which it was
wished to
place before the reader; a bit of cleverness, an
attractive cut,
or some other catchy device has been used, with the
hope that
the hit or miss ratio could be made as favorable as
possible.

But the future must needs be full of better methods
than
these to make advertising advance with the same
rapidity as
it has during the latter part of the last century. And
this will
come through a closer knowledge of the psychological

composi-
tion of the mind. The so-called "students of human
nature"
will then be called successful psychologists, and the
successful
advertisers will be likewise termed psychological
advertisers.

The mere mention of psychological terms - habit, self,
con-
ception, discrimination, association, memory,
imagination and.
perception, reason, emotion, instinct, and will -
should create
a flood of new thought that should appeal to every
advanced
consumer of advertising space.

Previous to the appearance of this article (March,
1901) there had been no attempt to present psychology
to the business world in a usable form. As far as the
advertiser could see all psychologies were written with
a purely theoretical end in view. They contained a vast
amount of technical material devoid of interest to the
layman who struggled through the pages. This condi-
tion made it quite difficult for the business man to
ex-
tract that part of the subject which was of value to
him.

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Several of the leading advertising magazines and ad-
vertising agencies sought to father a movement which
would result in such a presentation of the subject of
psychology that it would be of use to the intelligent
and practical advertiser. These efforts on the part of
the advertis'ers were successful in stimulating several
professional psychologists to co-operate with practical
advertisers in applying psychology to advertising.
Psychological laboratories were fitted up to make vari-
ous tests upon advertisements. Elaborate investigations
were undertaken and carried through to a successful
issue. Psychologists turned to the study of
advertisings
in all its phases while, on the other hand, intelligent
and

successful advertisers began to devote attention to a systematic study of psychology. Investigators in the various parts of the country and among different classes of society united in their efforts to solve some of the knotty problems which are ever before the business man who desires publicity for his commodity. Addresses were made before advertising clubs upon the specific topic of the psychology of advertising. The leading advertising journals in America and Europe sought and published articles on the subject.

The changed attitude of the advertising world became apparent in a few years. As typical of this change should be considered such statements as the following, taken from *Printers' Ink*, the issue of July 24, 1907: "Scientific advertising follows the laws of psychology. The successful advertiser, either personally or through his advertising department, must carefully study psychology. He must understand how the human mind acts. He must know what repels and what attracts. He must know what will create an interest and what will fall flat. . . . He must be a student of human

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nature, and he must know the laws of the human mind." Although italics were not used in the original, the word *must* is here put in italics to draw attention to the actual emphasis used by the author. In articles appearing on the subject before the last few years, all persons had spoken of the study of psychology as something which might be brought about in the future. At the present time the writers are asserting that the successful advertiser must study psychology and that he must do it at once. The Bibliography at the end of this volume contains the names of the important contributions made to the psychology of advertising during the last twenty-four years.

Although the attitude of the advertising world has changed and even though much has been done to present psychology in a helpful form to the advertisers, the work of the psychologist is not yet available to

the business world because the material has not been presented in any one accessible place. Contributions are scattered through the files of a score of American and European publications. Some articles appearing under this head are of minor significance, while others are so important that they should be collected in a place and form such that they would be available to the largest possible number of readers. The psychology of advertising has reached a stage in its development where all that has thus far been accomplished should be reconsidered. The worthless should be discarded and the valuable brought out into due prominence in systematic arrangement. In view of this condition of affairs the author has assumed the pleasing task of systematizing the subject of the psychology of advertising and of presenting it in such a form that it will be of distinct practical value to all who are interested in business promotion.

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II

PERCEPTION

Between our minds and bodies there is the closest possible relationship. The basis of this relationship is the nervous system. For our present purposes the nervous system may be thought of as consisting of three parts : the brain, the nerve endings (sense organs), and the fibers connecting the brain to these nerve endings. The brain fills the skull and is about one-fortieth of the weight of the entire body. The nerve endings are found in the so-called sense organs, that is, the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the ears, and the skin, and also in the joints and muscles. The nerve fibers are white, threadlike bands, which connect each nerve ending with a particular part of the brain, e.g., the optic nerve is

such a bundle of nerve fibers and it connects the various nerve endings in the eye with specific portions of the back part of the brain. The function of the nervous system may be likened to the transmitter, connecting wire, and receiver of a telephone. The similarity is striking in the case of all the nerve endings, but particularly so in the case of the ear. If air waves of a certain quality and of sufficient intensity strike against the transmitter of a telephone, electric currents are set up. They are propagated along the line till they reach the receiver. Here they reassume the form of air waves, and when heard are what we call sound. If air waves, vibrating from fourteen to forty thousand times a second, strike against our ear, a corresponding wave is

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propagated along the auditory nerve to the brain, where by some unknown process a sensation of sound is awakened which corresponds to the air wave. It will be sufficient to regard this and all other sensations as the direct result of the contact of the outer world with our nerve endings and particularly with our sense organs. The more intense the contact the more intense the sensation, and the quality of the sensation changes with the quality of the contact.

The first time a child opens its eyes the ether waves strike against the retina in which the nerve endings are located. Here a current is set up which is propagated to the brain. Then a pure sensation of sight occurs. The nature of the sensation depends entirely on the nature of the light and the current which it sets up. There is no recognition of the light, there is no comparison of it with other sensations, and no fusing of it into former sensations. This is the only really pure sensation of sight which the child will ever have, for its next sensation of sight will be seen in relation to the first sensation. It would be affirming too much to say that the child recognizes or compares this second sensation, but it is quite certain that this second sensa-

tion is to a very limited degree modified because of the preceding one. The second experience is added to from the previous one and so is not a pure sensation, but is a perception. A perception is a fusion of sensations with former experiences and embraces comparison, recognition, etc. When the term "perception" is used, special reference is intended to the sensation or sensations which are received through the sense organs and which enter into the total product called a perception. In the case of a young child, perceptions are largely sensational, while former experiences play a small part.

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When we come into contact with new objects or come into new experiences, we depend upon sensations to form a large part of our perceptions, and the former experiences add relatively a small part to the total product. The first time we saw an orange, we saw it merely as an object of a particular color. Then we touched it, and our perception of it became the perception of an object with a particular color and a particular shape and touch. Then we tasted and smelt it, and each of these new sensations added a new element to our perception. Now, as we see an orange in the distance, we perceive it as an object having a certain color, touch, taste, odor, weight, etc. The only sensation that we have, as the orange is in the distance, is one of sight, but our perception contains these other elements which we add from our former experience. Little by little the elements added to perception by sensation decrease and the elements added by former experience increase till we can get a good perception of an orange even if it is at a great distance from us and if it is in poor light. The process continues and we begin to use symbols for the object and our perceptions are of symbols rather than of objects. One of the first symbols to be perceived is the spoken word, later the picture, and then the printed word. The spoken word "orange" becomes associated with the sight,

touch,
taste, etc., of the fruit. Whenever we hear the word "orange" we immediately think of the fruit with its special appearance, touch, taste, etc. Our awareness of the absent object is called an "idea," awareness of objects present to the senses is called a "perception." The symbol has no symbolic signification, and becomes the object of the sensation itself unless it typifies to the persons something which they have met in their

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former experience. Thus a Chinese letter is to me no symbol, but is a group of lines. As I look at it I receive the same sensation that a Chinaman does, but the perception is different because he adds more from his former experience than I do. The letter awakens in his mind an idea of some object or event which is symbolized by the letter. The letter awakens in my mind no idea because it has not been associated in my experience with any object or event.

A cartoon of Woodrow Wilson awakens in me an idea of the man rather than a perception of the few curved and straight lines composing the symbolic cartoon.

The distinction between the terms "perception" and "idea" is very small. If an orange is before me, I perceive the orange. If a symbol of an orange is before me, I may merely perceive the symbol that is present or the symbol may awaken in my mind an idea of the absent orange.

Whether we are thinking of present or absent objects, — whether our thought is in the form of perceptions or of ideas, — it is certain that a large part of our thinking is determined by the sensations which come to us through eye and ear, and the other sense organs. We first become acquainted with objects through the sensations which we receive from them, and when we think of them afterward we think in terms of sensations. If I should try to learn about a new kind of fruit which was discovered in Africa, I could

acquire the knowledge of it in two different ways: I could secure some of the fruit and then receive all the sensations from it possible. I would look at it, touch it, lift it, smell it, bite it, taste it. This would be the best way to learn of it. If this were impossible I might

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read descriptions and see pictures of it and then I would think of it (have ideas of it) in terms of touch, weight, smell, and taste which were taken from former experiences in which similar objects were present to my senses. Whether we think by means of perceptions or by means of ideas, the original material of thought and the forms of thought come to us in sensations.

The original, easiest, and surest method of acquiring knowledge is through perceptions, in which the sensations play a leading part. In many instances the object of thought cannot be present to the senses and, furthermore, the processes of thought are made more rapid by substituting symbols for the original. Thus, early in the history of the race, a spoken language was developed in which spoken words were symbols for objects of thought. Later, a pictorial writing was invented in which crude portraits were made to symbolize objects. The latest products of civilized humanity in this direction are, first, more perfect portraits and, second, a form of printed language in which the original symbolic spoken word is represented by a symbol. This second form is the most convenient and is the one in ordinary use, but it should be observed that our printed words are nothing but symbols of symbols. The printed word is an uninteresting thing in itself and is only used because it assists perception on account of its simplicity and ease of manipulation. It is easy to describe a scene or a commodity and to reduce the description to printed form that will be accessible to thousands. It would be extremely difficult to deliver the scene and the commodity directly to these same people. The description and illustration are, however, not so clear, distinct, and interesting as is the

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