

Social issues infotainment:

Using emotion and entertainment to attract readers' attention in social issues leaflets

Published in:

Information Design Journal V11(1) pp67-81

2003

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Abstract

Printed leaflets are widely used in social issues campaigns, but there is little evidence to suggest that they are consistently successful and little research to help campaigners decide what techniques will attract audience attention. Existing research suggests that leaflets may be successful for audiences who are actively looking for information, but less successful for audiences who either don't know or don't care about the topic being promoted. In this paper, I focus on the strategies that campaigners use to attract readers' attention to social issues leaflets. I identify two broad message strategies – information/argument strategies and emotion/entertainment strategies – and, through a review of the social issues literature, examine how these strategies are typically used by campaigners. I review a collection of existing social issues leaflets to explore the strategies most frequently used, and analyse one leaflet to describe how attention-getting strategies are used in practice. Through my review of existing leaflets, I conclude that most leaflets adopt an information/argument strategy to present their information. I argue that this may explain why leaflets are most useful for audiences who are already interested in the topic. The information/argument strategy provides straightforward information: it assumes an interested audience and does little to attract audience attention. I question whether leaflets may be more successful with uninterested audiences if they adopted some of the attention-getting devices included in the emotion/entertainment message strategy.

Introduction

Leaflets, postcards, and other printed materials are produced in vast quantities to communicate the messages of social issues campaigns. Their subjects vary enormously; leaflets are designed to convince people to quit smoking, to eat healthier foods, drive safely, understand health issues, and obey new legislation – to name just a few.

Printed materials are important resources for social issues campaigners. Print is used by organisations to communicate with audiences more frequently than any other communication tool (*Tips for planning your publication*, 1997). And, while the growth in online communication may be transforming the ways that organisations communicate with their audiences, there are some commentators who argue that online communication will simply increase the need for all types of communication, including printed materials (Wheen, 2000).

Social issues leaflets are rarely produced in isolation. They are usually part of campaigns which involve multiple communication tools; campaigners combine tools such as events, news coverage, advertising, entertainment programmes, education activities, and a variety of printed materials to maximise the audience's exposure to campaign messages. The effects of each tool are likely to be enhanced when accompanied by supplementary messages and activities (Backer, Rogers, & Sopory, 1992; Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 209).

Although leaflets are rarely produced as the only tangible product of a social issues campaign, they are often forced to stand alone. The readers of leaflets could be almost anyone, leaflets are typically distributed in erratic ways (Myers, 1999), and leaflet designers can rarely guarantee that their audiences have encountered related campaign materials. This means that social issues leaflets must provide a complete communication package: they must introduce and explain their message, provide evidence to support their argument, include advice on how the proposed behaviours can be adopted and maintained, and offer avenues for readers to gather more detailed information. But, before leaflets' communication aims can be achieved, they must attract the audience's attention and persuade people to read. While exposure to a leaflet is not enough to persuade a reader to adopt a message, without exposure, persuasion is impossible (Rimal, Flora, & Schooler, 1999).

In this paper, I focus on the strategies used to attract readers' attention to social issues leaflets (I define 'leaflets' as printed information materials designed for wide and free distribution; the standard format for leaflets is an A4 page folded twice to fit in a business-sized envelope, but many variations on this theme exist). I identify two broad strategies that information designers use to reach audiences: information/argument strategies that are used to provide key messages, and emotion/entertainment strategies that are used to attract audience attention and persuade audiences to read. Through a review of the social issues literature, I consider how these strategies are used by campaigners. I then review a collection of existing social issues leaflets to examine the strategies most frequently used in leaflets, and analyse one leaflet to describe how attention-getting strategies are used in practice.

Audiences must first be persuaded to read

A social issues leaflet is always designed with some broad campaign objective in mind; readers are expected to draw on the information to improve their lives in some way. Leaflets may be produced on the unspoken assumption that, because the information is important and valuable, the intended audience will receive, read, understand, and act on the information simply as a matter of course (Grunig, 1997). Yet much of the existing literature about leaflets suggests that audiences have low expectations of them (Kempson & Moore, 1994). Audiences are likely to avoid leaflets because they expect them to be difficult to understand, uninteresting, unlikely to answer their specific questions, and time-consuming to read (Epstein, 1981; Jansen & Steehouder, 1984).

One key intervening issue in people's decisions to read leaflets is their level of interest, or involvement, in the topic being covered. High levels of involvement encourage active information seeking and attention, while low levels of involvement encourage passive information processing (Assael, 1998; Grunig, 1997).

Involved audiences are likely to read leaflets because of their prior interest in the topic; they tend to think about the topic, learn from campaign material, and make use of the information they receive (Rimal, Flora, & Schooler, 1999). For example, two studies examining health information leaflets found that the leaflets achieved significant success when distributed to involved audiences in an individual context (Laher, O'Malley, O'Brien, O'Hanrahan, & O'Boyle, 1981; Turner, Blaney, Roy, Odling-Smee, Irwin, & Mackenzie, 1984). Wright (1999) suggests that involved audiences approach texts with questions: they actively look for information that is relevant to their situation, and their reading becomes a form of dialogue with the text as they ask questions and seek out answers.

In contrast, audiences who are not involved in the topic are unlikely to approach leaflets with questions. They may notice a message if it is encountered, but they are unlikely to seek it out. Unless something about the leaflet makes it attract their attention and appear relevant to their needs, uninvolved audiences are unlikely to notice, let alone read, a leaflet. As Schriver (1997) notes, most people will not choose to read a leaflet unless they believe there is some benefit in doing so and they can not get the information in some easier way (p. 166). This creates a real challenge for social issues communicators: in many cases, the audiences that they would most like to reach are the audiences who have the least interest in the issue being discussed (Flay, 1981).

Although audience involvement is widely recognised to influence the success of social issues leaflets, little research has addressed what techniques can be used to motivate audiences to increase their involvement in an issue (Parrott, 1995, p. 9). Wright (1999) suggests that campaigners attempt to solve this problem by using 'attention-getting devices that alert readers to information that they did not realise they needed to know' (p. 89). According to Louis and Sutton (1991), various attention-getting devices allow campaigners to convince people to 'shift cognitive gears', shaking people out of their normal 'automatic engagement' with messages to encourage a more active and considered response.

Attention-getting devices may be important tools for temporarily increasing involvement, but little research considers what these attention-getting devices might involve or how they might be used. Many social issues campaigns use alternative communication tools to initially attract attention (such as television advertisements which can more successfully grab the attention of uninvolved audiences), but social issues leaflets may need to incorporate attention-getting devices in their own right. While some distribution strategies can guarantee audience interest (such as leaflets distributed in face-to-face contexts or in response to requests for information), many distribution environments require leaflets to compete for audience attention (such as leaflet racks in waiting rooms and advice centres, or mass distribution via direct mail).

For the people producing social issues leaflets, then, one of the important questions to address is how to attract audience attention. This goes beyond questions of readability and usability to explore what makes someone notice and attend to a leaflet. What strategies can campaigners use in leaflets to increase audience involvement, encourage active communication, and persuade readers to ask questions?

Attention-getting strategies available for social issues leaflets

Moriarty (1991) operates from an advertising perspective to discuss the strategies that campaigners can use to attract readers' attention. She suggests that advertising strategies can be either product-centred or audience-centred, and can focus on either an informational, logical appeal or an emotional, image-based appeal. Moriarty argues that most attention-getting advertising strategies can be summarised into five approaches (pp. 82–88):

- argument (using logic to develop a selling premise)
- information (providing descriptions, comparisons, and 'how-to' information)
- image (building a brand-concept and user-concept over the long-term)
- emotion (strategies that touch the feelings)
- entertainment (strategies that charm or please).

I draw on Moriarty's approaches to consider two broad categories of message strategies used by campaigners: information/argument message strategies and emotion/entertainment message strategies. Information/argument message strategies rely on supported evidence and the straightforward presentation of fact; emotion/entertainment message strategies overlay the educative message with some emotive or entertaining device that is designed to capture readers' attention.

While I discuss message strategies separately, I recognise that they are not mutually exclusive; they can be used individually or in combination (Burgoon, 1989). And, given the underlying persuasive intent of social issues campaigns, it seems unlikely that leaflets will adopt an emotion/entertainment message strategy without also incorporating an information/argument message strategy. While emotion/entertainment may be used to attract attention, information/argument is likely to provide the campaign's key message. Burgoon (1989) notes that the most effective messages may combine characteristics of both strategies. But Kotler

and Andreason (1987) suggest that there is little evidence to suggest that any message strategy is necessarily most effective (p. 512).

Message strategies cut across all aspects of a leaflet; they can not be seen as properties of either the leaflet's format, the written text, or the design, but are realised through the combination of these elements. In the context of my interest in this paper, message strategies work at the whole-document level – they are the strategies that help readers decide whether to make the effort involved in picking up and reading a leaflet.

Information/argument message strategies

Moriarty (1991) suggests that message strategies that rely on information are useful for new products and improved features, while message strategies that rely on logical argument are useful for complex messages that require important decisions. Information and argument message strategies, which rely on supported evidence and the straightforward presentation of fact, are frequently used in social issues campaigns (Monahan, 1995; Parrott, 1995, p. 11). For example, in a review of 127 AIDS television advertisements, Freimuth, Hammond, Edgar, and Monahan (1990) found that more than half used an information strategy to provide straightforward fact.

Information/argument message strategies may be most useful for audiences who are involved with the topic and actively seeking information (Assael, 1998, p. 159). This means that information/argument message strategies may be suited to active audiences who approach the leaflet with questions.

Emotion/entertainment message strategies

Moriarty (1991) suggests that emotion or entertainment strategies are useful for capturing the audience's attention for low-involvement and relatively unimportant products. These strategies may also be useful for low-involvement audiences, temporarily increasing involvement by capturing the audience's attention with peripheral cues (McGuire, 2000; O'Keefe, Rosenbaum, Lavrakas, Reid, & Botta, 1996, p. 126). Emotion/entertainment message strategies can be valuable in helping to overcome the defence mechanisms that people use to filter out information that is not relevant or interesting. For example, Stephenson, Palmgreen, Hoyle, Donohew, Puzles Lorch, and Colon (1999) argue that messages which adopt creative, unusual, complex, intense, explicit, unconventional, or fast-paced message strategies can help to overcome boredom and disinterest.

A key advantage of emotion/entertainment message strategies is that they work rapidly and globally, capturing the audience's attention ahead of content which requires more careful thought, and influencing subsequent processing of the message (Dillard, Plotnick, Goodbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1996, p. 46; Monahan, 1995, p. 84). But Deutchman (in Backer, Rogers & Sopory, 1992) argues that community education campaigners rarely take enough risks in adopting emotion/entertainment message strategies. He suggests that, instead of

communicating simple informative messages like 'it's responsible not to drink', campaigners should create an emotive message like 'it's fun and wonderful not to drink'; these emotion/entertainment message strategies would allow campaigners to compete with commercial advertising (p. 68).

Emotion strategies

The value of emotion strategies in social issues campaigns is not well documented, partly because emotion is conceptualised in different ways (such as the emotionality of the issue, the emotional state of the viewer, the emotions evoked by the message, or emotional strategies within the message) (Flora & Maibach, 1990).

Flora and Maibach (1990) review emotional and rational messages used in AIDS television advertisements; they provide evidence that emotional messages may be more memorable than rational messages for audiences with low levels of involvement, and that emotional messages may stimulate a desire to learn more about the topic. However, they found no differences in the effectiveness of emotional and rational messages for audiences with high levels of involvement.

Palmer (2000) notes that social issues campaigns increasingly use strong, emotional images to attract attention, provoking mixed reactions from audiences and funders. Controversial campaigns include the USA-based Breast Cancer Fund's images of models manipulated so that they appeared to have undergone mastectomies, the UK-based Help the Aged's image of feet in a morgue (part of an appeal for heating and food for elderly people), and the UK's Commission for Racial Equality's campaign using overtly racist slogans to highlight racial ignorance. Palmer notes that campaigners choose these images to draw audiences in and encourage them to think; emotive images are part of getting the campaign's voice heard in the competitive marketplace. The trade-off for campaigners is to find images that will grab attention without alienating existing supporters.

Entertainment strategies

Entertainment strategies aim to attract and keep audience attention by entertaining people as a major element of the campaign; they use the universal appeal of entertainment to communicate the educational message (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 9). Bryant (1989) proposes that entertainment strategies are successful because people have become avid seekers of entertainment; sources that provide entertaining messages are highly valued, and people's selection of messages, including educational messages, depends at least partially on the entertainment embellishments included (p. 231).

Entertainment-education strategies question the dichotomy that exists in most mass media content: that media must be either entertaining or educational. Singhal and Rogers (1999) note that a balanced mix of entertainment and education is essential if the strategy is to work; the educational content can not be too blatant, or the audience will reject the message (p. 211). To date, the entertainment-education approach has primarily been applied to television and radio programmes, particularly in developing countries. While Singhal and Rogers (1999) argue that entertainment-education strategies can apply to a variety of resources, my review uncovered

little discussion of entertainment appeals used in other communication resources. One exception here is that educational comics are occasionally mentioned as fitting under the entertainment-education approach (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p. 14).

Sabin (1993) notes that comics can be a useful strategy for presenting complex information in a clear and understandable way. He quotes research by the USA's Defence Department exploring the production of training manuals. After comparing various printed resources – plain text, illustrated text, text with photographs, and comic strips – the Defence Department concluded that comics strips were the most effective way of getting their information across. Sabin (1993) argues that comics can convey an enormous amount of information in a limited space (p. 8). In contrast, Frascara (1997) questions the value of comics: his research suggests that comics may not suit some topics because they tend to make serious topics look like fun (pp. 88–93).

Humour strategies

Humour is widely used and studied in commercial advertising, but has received relatively little attention in social issues campaigns. Commercial advertisers generally propose that humour helps to improve an advertisement's memorability and the audience's intention to purchase the product (Perry, Jenzowsky, King, Yi, Hester, & Gartenschlaeger, 1997). Humour may be most powerful when it is perceived as being relevant to the product being advertised, but its use was unanticipated by the audience (Lee & Mason, 1999).

Although humour strategies have not been widely studied in social issues campaigns, there is some evidence that humour should be treated with caution. Frascara (1997) examined various resources about drinking and driving through focus group research and concluded that humorous, light-hearted materials are not appropriate for some serious topics. Carter (1985) notes that humour can enhance the interest and concreteness of many resources, but inappropriate humour can reduce usability and effectiveness (p. 147). Monahan (1995) warns that some topics are not good candidates for humour. For example, if people are negatively disposed to an idea (such as using condoms), including humour may cause the audience to denigrate the idea even further (Monahan, 1995, p. 93). McGuire (1989) expresses concern that, while humour can increase initial attention to the message, it has potentially negative effects as a distractor from comprehension and agreement (p. 49).

Fear strategies

Fear strategies are widely used in social issues campaigns, perhaps reflecting a folk theory that predicts message acceptance as a function of induced fright (Dillard et al., 1996, p. 44). Fear strategies emphasise the dire consequences that will befall people if they fail to adopt the campaign's recommendations.

Studies exploring the effects of fear are mixed and inconclusive (Boster & Mongeau, 1984; Hale & Dillard, 1995; Hastings & Stead, 1999, p. 13). While some authors suggest that the anxiety created by a fear strategy will provide the motivation needed to increase involvement (Roser & Thompson, 1995), other authors propose that fear is rarely as effective as strategies that emphasise the positive consequences of behaviour change (Backer, Rogers, & Sopory,

1992, pp. 30–32; O’Keefe et al., 1996, p. 124). Atkin (in Backer, Rogers, & Sopory, 1992) argues that the success of fear strategies will depend on the perceived likelihood of the threat invoked; high-probability, high-likelihood fear strategies of undetectable consequences are most likely to be effective (p. 49).

Novel devices

Novel devices used to encourage attention include strategies that might be considered notable or unusual by the audience (Flay, 1981, p. 65). For example, devices to attract attention might include unusual formats; and devices to encourage involvement might include self-help checklists, competitions, or give-aways. Kostelnick (1996) notes that, while novel formats can be used to attract a reader’s attention, they may backfire if they undermine the resource’s credibility or if the reader is unable to determine how the resource should be read (p. 26).

Kempson and Moore (1994) report a study by BMJ Research Partners suggesting that novel devices such as competitions can increase both reader understanding and action (p. 93). BMJ Research Partners found that, when the Department of Energy included a competition (to win a house) in a booklet promoting energy efficiency, people who entered the competition were more likely to recall information from the booklet and more likely to have made energy-efficient installations in their homes than people who had received the booklet but not entered the competition. While this provides evidence that novel devices can be linked to the booklet’s success, it says little about what creates this link. The finding of increased knowledge amongst people who entered the competition could suggest that interested audiences will take up novel devices such as competitions, or it could suggest that novel devices encourage interest and reading.

Design devices

Design devices used to encourage attention can include any aspect of the visual concept, layout, and images. The visual design of a leaflet is an integral part of its rhetorical appeal, and is intended to affect the audience’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in some way. To achieve their persuasive intent, campaigners aim to design leaflets that are detectable, discriminable, attractive, and convincing (Frascara, 1997, p. 3).

Although a substantial body of research examines the design of publications, little research considers how design devices work within social issues campaigns to attract audience attention. In addition, little research discusses design devices within a real reading context. The social issues campaign literature is largely silent on issues relating to the visual design of campaign resources.

The design devices used to attract audience attention are not transparent and universally understood: they are both culturally and situationally specific (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 3). This specificity means that there is no universal visual grammar and that there can be no reliable guidelines about what devices will be effective for any individual leaflet. For this reason, I do not attempt to give a comprehensive discussion of the various attention-getting design devices here. Instead, I give a brief overview of the most widely-discussed design devices used by social issues campaigners.

Design devices can work as part of a leaflet's message strategy in a variety of ways:

- Design can form a visual structure for leaflets, providing coherence, cohesion, and meaning at the document level in a similar way to the structure provided by content and punctuation at the word level (Bernhardt, 1986; Waller, 1982).
- Design can highlight particular elements of a leaflet, helping readers to quickly see whether the leaflet will answer their questions (Wright, 1999).
- Design can work with the leaflet's text to create or reinforce other message strategies (such as humour, entertainment, and fear) (Horn, 1998, p. 193).
- Design devices such as headings can focus readers' attention, break the text into visually coherent parts, and label the text so that readers can quickly locate the information they need (Duchastel, 1982, p. 181).
- Design devices such as graphics, illustrations, and photographs are widely used in leaflets to attract and focus readers' attention, add interest, and assist in comprehension (Duchastel, 1982, p. 185).

Design devices can be used to attract specific audiences for leaflets, setting the tone of the resource and visually defining the resource's intended audience. Design devices may play an important role in determining how a reader interprets the resource's intended audience and the author's purpose. For example, Schriver's (1997) study of young people's reactions to drug education leaflets shows that participants are accustomed to judging visual designs and readily infer meanings from the choice and design of materials (p. 172).

Design devices may play an important role in attracting the attention of uninvolved audiences, temporarily increasing involvement and encouraging attention. Working within an advertising context, Gardner, Mitchell, and Russo (1983, in Assael, 1998, p. 159) argue that uninvolved audiences are more likely to notice visual elements of advertisements (such as characters and scenery) without linking those elements to a particular brand. This is supported by Schumann, Petty, and Clemens (1990), who found that varying the design elements of an advertisement across multiple presentations had a greater impact on uninvolved audiences, while varying the substantive content of the advertisement across multiple presentations had a greater impact on involved audiences.

Examining the attention-getting devices used in social issues leaflets

The literature discussed in the previous section suggests that attention-getting devices based on emotion and entertainment strategies may work to temporarily increase audience involvement and encourage people to read social issues leaflets. But the research suggests that these devices can not be taken for granted; incorporating emotion or entertainment into social issues leaflets will not automatically work to increase audience attention and, at times, it may backfire. In addition, emotion and entertainment can not be seen as universal, automatically-understood strategies. Emotion and entertainment do not exist independently within a text; like all meanings, emotion and entertainment are created by readers as they interact with the text (McCormick, 1994). What is emotive or entertaining for one audience member may not be emotive or entertaining for someone else (Frascara, 2000).

To further understand the attention-getting devices used in social issues leaflets, I reviewed a selection of existing leaflets available from information agencies in Reading (UK). I collected 313 different social issues leaflets produced by government and community-based organisations. These leaflets were available on leaflet racks of a variety of information centres – rather than being distributed in an individual context, these leaflets were competing for audience attention.

I divided the leaflets into two categories:

1. leaflets using only an information/argument strategy to communicate their message (that is, leaflets that clearly reveal their topic and present information in a simple, straightforward manner)
2. leaflets using an emotion/entertainment strategy to attract audience attention (given the lack of existing evidence about how these strategies are used in leaflets, I included in this category any leaflets that did not quickly and clearly reveal their topic and any leaflets that used attention-getting devices or peripheral cues which were not part of the main message).

Sorting the leaflets in this way revealed that most of the leaflets used an information/argument strategy to present their message. Of the 313 leaflets collected, 265 (85%) adopted an information/argument strategy – using clear, factual headings and presenting the information in a straightforward manner. While these leaflets varied in the text and design techniques used to form the message, they shared a common approach: they provided a rational message through the straightforward presentation of information. I provide examples of the approaches used in these leaflets in Figure 1.

The information/argument strategy dominates the leaflets collected for my review, and may help to explain why leaflets are most useful for audiences who are interested in the topic being covered. The information/argument strategy provides information in a straightforward manner: it assumes an interested audience and does little to attract audience attention, persuade audiences to read, or encourage audiences to ask questions about the topic. Social issues leaflets may be most useful for interested audiences because they predominantly use an information/argument strategy to communicate with their audiences.

Figure 1: Examples of leaflets adopting an information/argument strategy

Description of leaflet	Main headline	Key strategies used throughout
Leaflet promoting The British Stammering Association	Do you stammer?	Straightforward presentation of information including contact details for the association
Leaflet promoting The Stroke Association	Stroke? We'll help you pick up the pieces.	Straightforward presentation of facts about stroke and the services offered by the Association
Leaflet about metric weights developed by the Department of Trade and Industry	Shopping metric: A guide to buying loose foods	Question and answer format throughout (What goods will be affected by the change? What do I ask for? Will prices change?); includes a tear-out credit-card-sized card offering weight comparisons – this could be seen as a novel device for facilitating memory
Leaflet promoting the services of Shelterline	24 hour housing problems helpline. Shelterline	Provides details of Shelterline's services in bullet point form
Leaflet about health issues for travellers produced by the Department of Health	Health advice for travellers	Includes an index; information is presented in short sections with informative headings

Of the 313 leaflets collected, 48 (15%) fitted within my definition of leaflets adopting an emotion/entertainment strategy. These leaflets appeared to use specific devices to attract audience attention – either by concealing their topic in some way, or by incorporating some device to attract attention or encourage empathy. The leaflets seem to use emotion or entertainment in four different ways:

1. in some leaflets, the headline or cover did not clearly and quickly reveal its topic (in some cases, the headline or cover appeared to be deliberately misleading); these headlines and covers may be intended to add humour or intrigue to the leaflet
2. some leaflets incorporated examples – such as case studies, photocomics, cartoons, emotive vignettes, or quotes from celebrities; these examples may be designed to encourage empathy or identification
3. some leaflets were produced in a postcard form, and used only a postcard-style illustration on the cover which did not reveal the topic; these postcards may be designed to intrigue or entertain, or for distribution within the emerging genre of free (advertising) postcards widely available in British coffee shops and universities
4. some leaflets included devices to encourage attention or involvement – such as a discount or free offer, or a self-assessment questionnaire.

All of the leaflets adopting an emotion/entertainment strategy combined their attention-getting devices with straightforward presentation of the main message (that is, they combined the emotion/entertainment strategy with the information/argument strategy). Examples of the approaches used in leaflets adopting emotion/entertainment strategies are included in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Examples of leaflets adopting an emotion/entertainment strategy

Description of leaflet	Main headline	Key strategies used throughout
Leaflet about recycling produced by Reading Borough Council	5 r's	Headline does not immediately reveal the topic, but it is revealed in the subheading (on the cover, but difficult to read) (How to recycle in Reading); remainder of leaflet provides straightforward information about why recycling is needed and the sites for recycling in Reading (the leaflet never reveals the meaning of the main headline)
Leaflet promoting television licences to students	Uses an 87-word handwritten-style cover to discuss the student experience: As a student you have a licence to be different. You have a licence to fit nine people in a clapped-out orange Datsun. To try and get lucky in the library ...	Topic is not revealed on the leaflet's cover, but is revealed when the reader turns the page to finish the introduction (You have licence to sit in a semi trance watching late night TV. But only if you have a TV licence.) Remainder of leaflet provides straightforward information about when TV licences are necessary and how they can be bought
Leaflet about food safety produced by The Department of Health	Now you're cooking	The topic is not immediately revealed in the main heading, and the subheading (How to avoid food poisoning) is small and visually separated from the main headline The leaflet includes a free offer: readers can receive a free memo board or coffee mug if they answer questions about the quality of the leaflet The leaflet's main text involves straightforward presentation of fact
Leaflet about chlamydia produced by the Health Education Authority	'Who's Chlamydia?' When Claire's boyfriend told her that he had Chlamydia, she got the wrong end of the stick	Depending on whether the reader knows what chlamydia is, this leaflet could create humour about the topic or suspicion about Claire's boyfriend (either of which readers may relate to) The remainder of the leaflet defines and discusses chlamydia through straightforward presentation of fact
Leaflet about drugs produced by the Health Education Authority	Drugs: The facts	About half of the leaflet provides straightforward information about drugs (structured under headings – 'slang names' 'what it looks like' 'how it's taken', 'why some people take this drug', and 'what the risks are') The leaflet includes quotes with photos from un-named young people (perhaps as endorsement from peers), two case studies about young people's drug experiences, a drugs quiz and question-and-answer activity with the answers hidden under silver scratch-it panels, and a problem page with letters to a drugs counsellor
Postcard about meningitis symptoms produced by the Meningitis Research Foundation	Get Savvy. Save a life.	The front of the postcard does not reveal the topic – the headline is combined with a cinema-style image The reverse of the postcard gives straightforward information about the symptoms of meningitis

Illustrating attention-getting devices: The Australian National Alcohol Campaign

A leaflet produced in Australia for the National Alcohol Campaign clearly illustrates how the emotion/entertainment strategy and the information/argument strategy combine to attract audience attention and provide social issues messages. The leaflet is reproduced in Figure 3¹.

The National Alcohol Campaign is designed to provide a harm-minimisation message about alcohol to young Australians aged 15-17. Campaign materials include television and press advertisements, a web site, publications for parents, and the leaflet for teenagers illustrated in Figure 3. The leaflet was distributed in three ways: it was inserted in two magazines (*Dolly* and *TV Hits*), it was distributed through sponsors (a national cinema chain and national video chain), and it was available through Australian health services (Carroll, Lum, Taylor, & Travia, 2000). Given these distribution techniques, this leaflet was forced to compete for audience attention; it was generally not distributed to interested audiences in a face-to-face context.

The leaflet adopts an information/argument strategy to provide clear and straightforward information about alcohol. But the leaflet overlays its information with a series of devices which are intended to attract and keep the audience's attention:

- The leaflet uses a novel format; in place of the traditional format, the leaflet is designed as a Z-Card™ – a double-sided page (approximately 470 x 255mm) which folds to a credit card size with cardboard covers (the covers are the panels with photographs and the headline 'Drinking. Where are your choices taking you?'). This format is portable (it fits in a wallet), stands out from more traditional leaflets, and is recognised by young people as new and interesting (Gregory, 1999).
- The leaflet uses a type of peer communication case study with teenagers making choices about drinking alcohol (the photographs which form these case studies are taken from the television and press advertisements). Shiner and Newburn (1996) note that slightly-older peers who have some experience with the topic are credible communicators and attract the attention of young audiences.
- The leaflet includes quotes from young celebrities, a widely-used technique for attracting attention through credible, visible, and attractive communicators (Backer, Rogers, & Sopory, 1992; Hastings & Stead, 1999).
- The leaflet includes a true/false checklist about sobering up, which may encourage involvement and challenge myths in a way that isn't possible through the simple presentation of facts. Kempson and Moore (1994) note that interactive techniques which call for a response from readers may be useful for focusing attention and engaging readers' interest (p. 9).
- The leaflet includes two free offers, one from a video chain and one from a cinema. These offers are designed to encourage readers to keep and use the leaflet over many months.

¹ Acknowledgement is made to the Australian Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care for permission to reproduce this image from its 2000 National Alcohol Campaign.

- The leaflet includes a competition, with monthly prizes for people who visit the campaign's website.

Figure 3: Australian National Alcohol Campaign leaflet

attached

Conclusion

In this paper, I have proposed that two broad message strategies are used in social issues leaflets: information/argument and emotion/entertainment. These strategies have previously been applied to commercial advertising, and have been used to describe a variety of communication tools used in social issues campaigns.

My review suggests that information/argument strategies are used across most social issues leaflets to communicate the underlying message. But, when used alone, information/argument strategies assume an interested audience: they do little to attract the attention of audiences who are not already interested in the topic and who are not seeking information.

Although the social issues literature concentrates on the emotion/entertainment message strategies available to campaigners, these strategies appear to be minimally used in social issues leaflets. Emotion/entertainment strategies were used in only a small number of the leaflets that I collected – suggesting, perhaps, that communicators assume their audiences are interested in their topics and that merely presenting the information will be sufficient to meet their campaign's aims (Assael, 1998; Grunig, 1997).

Existing research suggests that leaflets using only information/argument strategies are generally not successful in communicating to audiences unless audience members are specifically looking for information. Incorporating attention-getting devices into social issues leaflets, such as the devices illustrated in the Australian National Alcohol Campaign's leaflet, may be appropriate techniques for attracting interest and attention.

In this paper, I have identified some of the emotion and entertainment strategies available to campaigners, and I have described some of the ways in which these strategies are used. However, identifying the strategies provides no evidence about whether emotion and entertainment strategies are successful in attracting audience attention. Emotion and entertainment strategies can only be evaluated through audience research in real reading environments with real audience members; research with real audiences is essential if social issues communicators are to develop a clearer understanding of when (and if) emotion and entertainment strategies are suitable in social issues leaflets.

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