

Simple trick for ad success: add art

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Advertisers trying to boost their products' appeal may need to look no farther than the nearest museum. New studies suggest throwing the image of a painting—almost any painting—onto a product, or into a product pitch, consistently makes viewers rate the items as more luxurious.

Art has connotations of excellence, luxury and sophistication that spill over onto goods with which it's associated, said the Vanessa M. Patrick, an assistant professor at the University of Georgia's business college, who co-authored the research. This so-called "art infusion effect" seems to work for everything from silverware to soap dispensers, she added. The researchers said they were pleasantly surprised to find that even in today's crass, loud media environment where advertisers rely on sex, celebrities and neon colors to cut through the din—something representative class and tradition still gets attention.

"Café Terrace at Night" (c. 1888) by Vincent van Gogh was found to make viewers rate silverware more positively in a study, but researchers say almost any painting would work.

But the content of the painting was important to the "art infusion effect," the researchers said, suggesting consumers might not appreciate the specific artworks themselves. It's the "general connotations of art itself" that seem to matter, Patrick said. Sound-ing a somewhat more optimistic note, study co-author Henrik Hagtvædt said the effect results because even consumers who don't both to examine a specific picture still admire the general request for excellence that art represents. People naturally recognize the creativity and skill involved, he said. "It's a universal phenomenon, and it stands out." Hagtvædt, himself a painter from Norway, added that "visual art has historically been used as a tool for persuasion... It has been used to sell everything from religion to politics to spaghetti sauce to the artist's image."

Hagtvedt and Patrick conducted three studies. First, they posed as waiters at a restaurant and showed 100 patrons sets of silverware in boxes. The top of the box had either a print of Vincent Van Gogh's Café Terrace at Night or a photo of a similar scene. Even after a brief sight of one of the images, diners rated the silverware in the box with art as more luxurious, they found. A second study, they said, found that a relatively unknown artwork can successfully vie with a famed celebrity in conveying luxury. The third found the picture's content is nearly as important as general connotations: indeed, even a painting of a burning building on a soap dispenser resulted in the object being seen as luxurious. The findings are to appear in the Journal of Marketing Research. The "œart infusion effect" may even beat other advertising tools in some ways, the researchers argued. Celebrity endorsements might appeal to only certain groups of people, and for limited times, but art is universally and always recognized. Its effect works for all kinds of products, not just luxury goods, Patrick added; the products in the studies were rather ordinary items such as silverware, soap dispensers and bathroom fixtures.

Courtesy University of Georgia and World Science staff

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