

# MADE YOU LOOK

HOW ADVERTISING WORKS  
AND WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW



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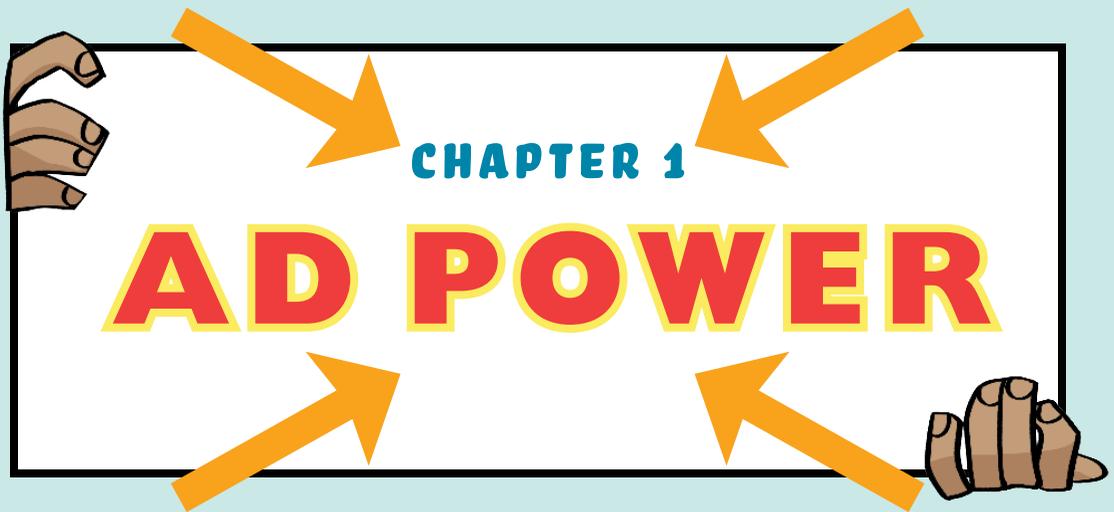
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**D**o you remember the day your parents sat you down to have a serious talk about advertising?

Me neither. And it's not something they ever test you on at school. Which is too bad: it's so easy to remember jingles and slogans that an ad exam might be the one test all year you wouldn't have to study for!

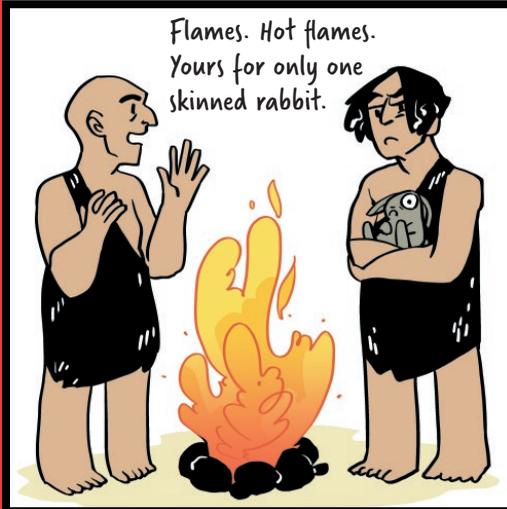
Really, you've been "studying" the subject almost since the day you were born: even as a baby, every time you got parked in front of the TV or carried past a store sign, you were absorbing the art—or some would say science—of persuasive communication.

You could say that advertising is basically anything someone does to grab your attention and hold onto it long enough to tell you how cool, fast, cheap, tasty, or awesome whatever they're selling is. Some people have a different view of it: they argue that advertising is trickery used to shut down your brain just long enough to convince you to open your wallet!

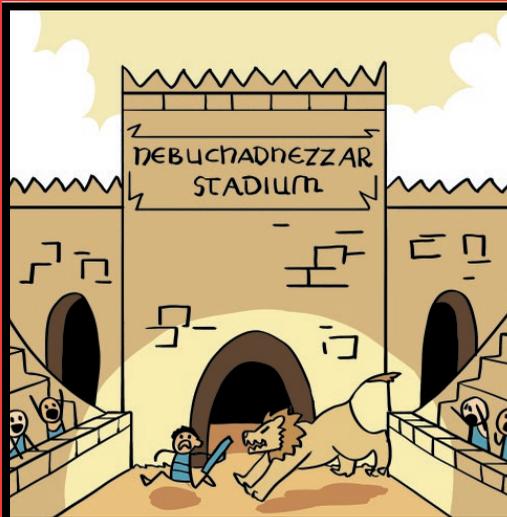
Whichever way you look at advertising, though, it's so much a part of our world that trying to imagine life without it starts to feel like a science-fiction movie: *Black Holes and Other Mysteries of Life Before Advertising*. And what do you want to bet it would be in black and white?

# ADVERTISING IN ANCIENT HISTORY

Advertising has been around in one form or another practically since people began rubbing two sticks together to make fire.



In ancient Greece, people put up posters offering rewards, and painted ads on their houses when they wanted to move.



In ancient Babylonia (now part of Iraq), the names of kings were stenciled on temples and buildings.



As cities developed, merchants carved wooden signs to hang outside their shops. Since most people couldn't read, the signs used pictures, not words.

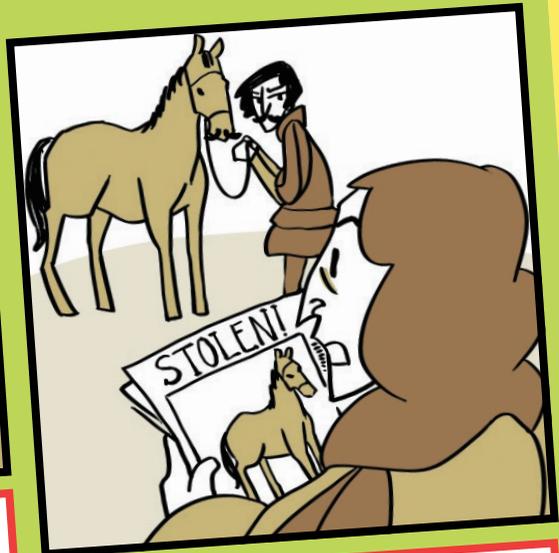
## THE PRINTED WORLD

**I**n the 1400s, the invention of the printing press revolutionized everything. Before then, religious leaders and scholars were generally the only people who could read and write; everyone else had to rely on oral communication—speaking and listening.

But the printing press made books more affordable and gave people more opportunity to become literate. The printing press also made it easy to produce other kinds of printed materials. As a result, handbills (single-sheet brochures) and posters became the first forms of “mass media” (literally, media available to masses of people).

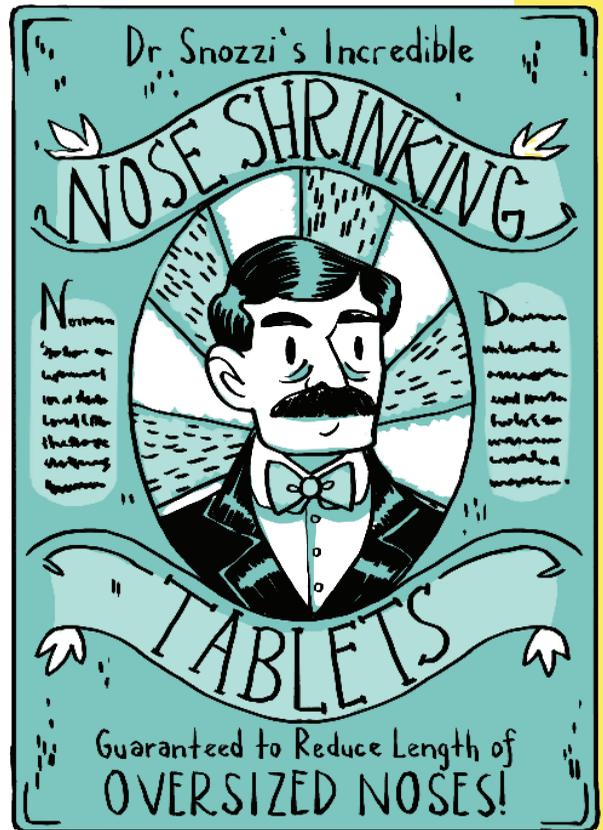


The earliest surviving print advertisement is a handbill that was posted on the door of a London church in 1472.



But many people still couldn't read. It wasn't until 200 years later that the first known newspaper ad—offering a reward for a stolen horse—showed up.

Soon there were newspapers, and then newspaper ads for all sorts of goods, such as coffee, real estate, and medicines. By 1758, there were so many advertisements that Samuel Johnson, a famous British writer, suggested that people had stopped paying attention to them, forcing advertisers to make “magnificent promises”—outrageous claims about what their products could do. (Two and a half centuries later, people are still complaining about advertisers’ tendency to exaggerate the truth.)



“Patent medicines” came to be seen as the biggest offenders. For one thing, they were rarely real medicine, and for another, their creators usually didn’t even bother registering these so-called “miracle cures” with the patent office, which was responsible for recording who invented what.

**THE REAL THING**  
 One of the world’s best-known products started out more than a century ago as a patent medicine. In the early 1900s, its ads promised users relief from headaches and exhaustion. Today, its claim, to quench your thirst, is more modest. But its name, Coca-Cola, has remained the same.

## CREATING CONSUMERS

**B**y the early 1800s, the industrial revolution had introduced machine power to manufacturing in Europe and North America. This allowed companies to produce many more goods at a much faster rate. Suddenly, things that people usually had to make themselves—like soap and candles—were now cheaper to buy than to make at home.

You might think that families would have been happy to give up the time-consuming process of churning butter or gathering beeswax. But most people weren't used to buying things. They had to be persuaded to start spending their money on the products companies were making for them.



That's when advertising really jumped into high gear. Its job became not only to get people to buy, but to convince them to think of themselves differently—as consumers. At the time, this was a radical idea. People tended to define themselves by what they did, or made. If they were competitive with their neighbors, it wasn't about who had the newest car or the biggest TV. It was much more about baking a tastier loaf of bread or being more skilled with a handsaw. Folks who had to buy their goods from someone else might actually be considered incompetent!

Advertisers had to work hard to change that attitude, to persuade people that factory-made—as opposed to homemade—items were better. One of the ways advertisers did this was to put logos on their packages. Campbell's Soup and Quaker Oats were among the first to do so, in the 1880s. The logos were designed to make mass-produced goods seem more familiar or personal. Characters—like the man who still appears as part of the Quaker Oats logo—were created to make people feel as if they were buying from a trusted shopkeeper.



### WHAT'S A LOGO?

A logo is a company's identifying "signature." It can be simply the company's name, written in a special style (like Coca-Cola's logo, for instance); it can be a symbol (like Nike's "swoosh"); or it can be a combination (like the Domino's Pizza logo, with the company's name next to a red domino).