

Choose Ad Images That Connect



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Introduction

All advertisers want to break through the clutter. But how can a brand keep its head above water in a sea of digital ads and content? In a digital marketing world constrained by character limits, the right visual can establish an emotional connection with your audience and deliver your brand's message in an impactful and transparent way. Images can enhance an ad and help tell the story in the most efficient way.

Over the past few months, we've analyzed thousands of online ads to discover what makes images work, why consumers respond to them, and how they visually interact with their computer screens. We conducted user interviews, ad campaign measurements, and eye tracking studies, and found the three best practices for identifying the most effective advertising images. Read on for more.



Pictures are a universal language, it's the original form of communication. Before we knew how to write, we were telling stories with images.

Connect with the consumer: emotion matters

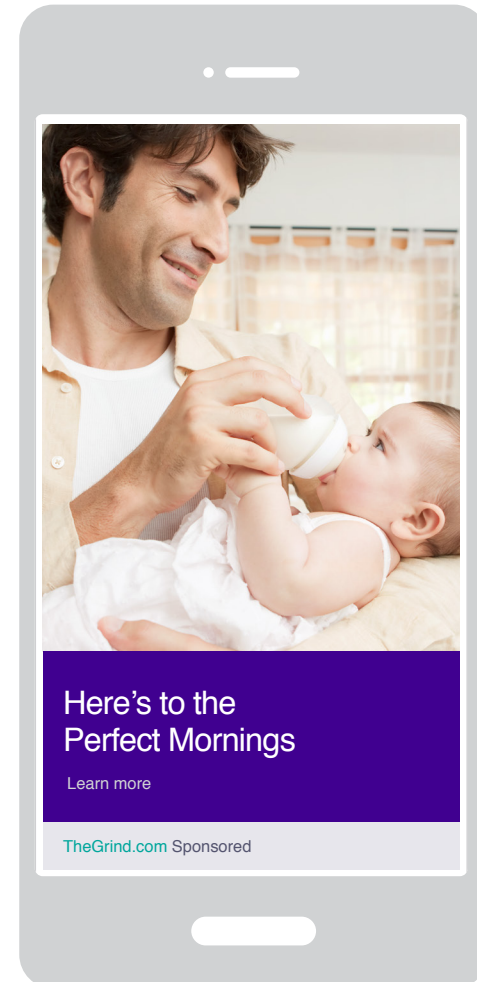
Our research showed that—perhaps not surprisingly— the best performing images establish a more powerful connection with consumers. These are images that tell a positive, aspirational story.

As shown in the example, viewers are drawn in and relate to the powerful connection between a father and his baby. They found this photo expressive, engaging and positive. As one study participant explained, “I’d be most likely to click the baby ad because I had kids and just to see what it is about...[the ad] reminds me of my days staying at home.”

Best Practices

To create this type of emotional connection:

- Communicate a positive and aspirational story that engages your consumers.
- Choose the right imagery and colors to help your ad stand out.



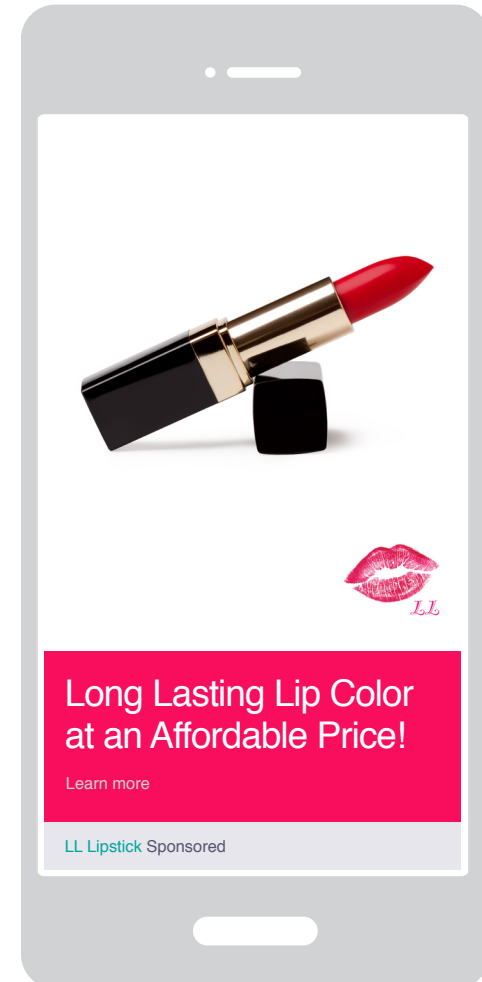
Connect with the product: simplicity & transparency sells

The best way to break through clutter is to remove clutter altogether. The most effective ads convey information about a product or service using a simple and memorable image. When showcasing products, marketers can't let the size or abundance of products get in the way of messaging.

Keep it simple

In side-by-side comparisons, we found that an ad with a **single product image** proved **67 percent** more persuasive than an ad featuring an array of products. Additionally, people preferred ads that included small logos, an especially relevant finding for native ad formats, where it is important to differentiate an ad from editorial content. Adding a logo boosted brand recognition by **20 percent**.

Interestingly, having **white space** with **smaller product shots**, like the lipstick example, was 21 percent more effective than ads with larger product images. This shows the importance of simplicity—sometimes, less is more.



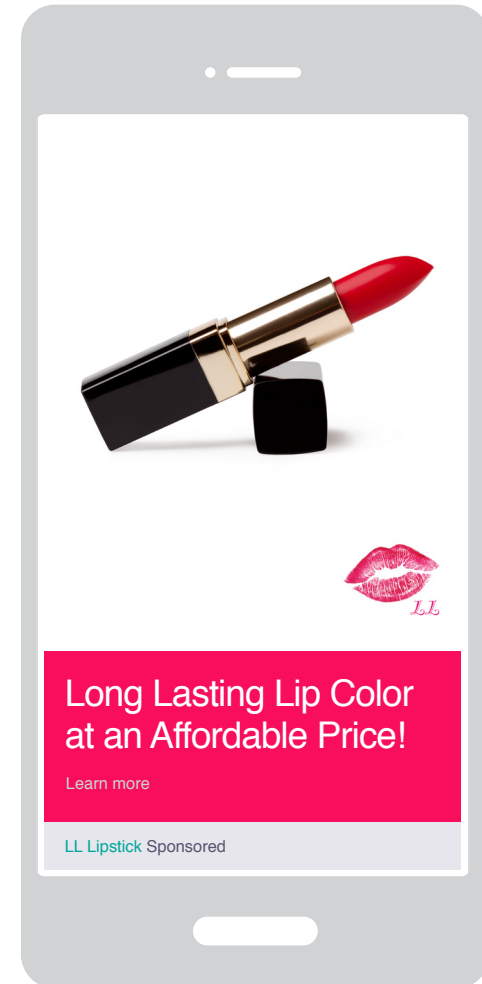
Connect with the product: simplicity & transparency sells

Insights

- Single product images proved **67% more persuasive** than an ad featuring an array of products.
- Smaller product images drove a **21% lift** in persuasion versus larger product images in ads.
- Adding a logo boosted brand recognition by **20%**.

Best Practices

- Keep it simple—focus on one product.
- Don't let the size of the product get in the way of your messaging.
- Include the logo to provide needed information. (closer to the headline for more noticeability)



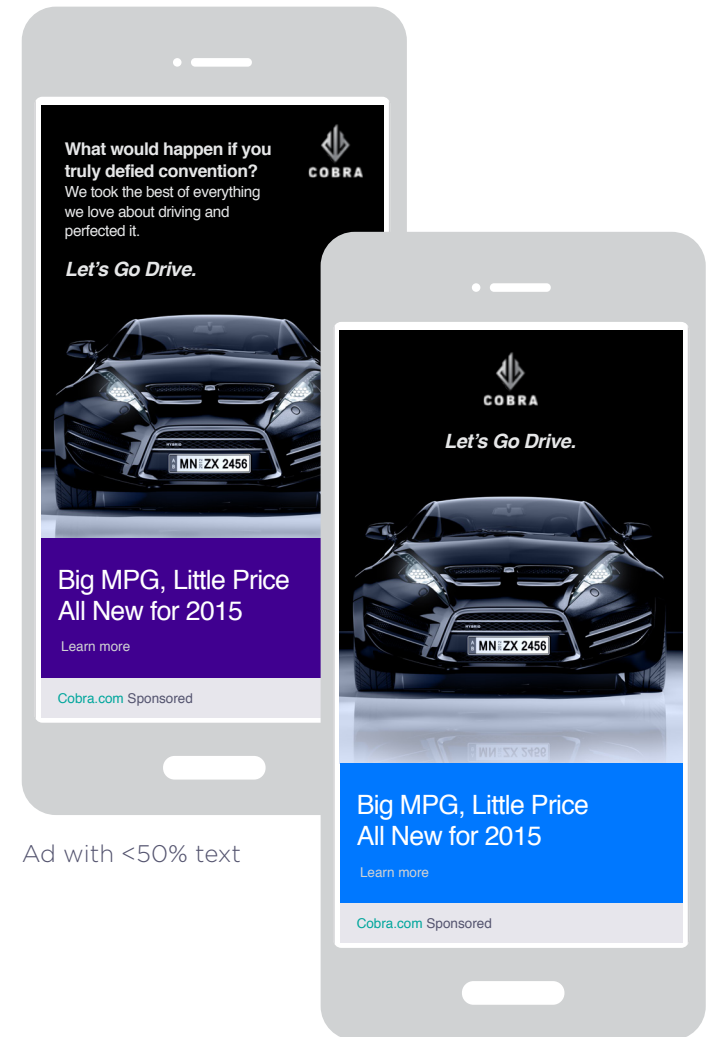
Connect with the copy: balance is best

Digital ad space is limited, so make every word count! Copy within an image should be kept to a minimum for maximum impact. We found that the **highest-performing ads struck a balance between a clear image and informative text**. In fact, consumers responded best to ads with 20 percent text or less. Additionally, copy that related to the image and worked in unison to tell a full story resulted in the best audience engagement.

It's vital to consider how all elements—logos, text, and images—work together to deliver the brand message you need to the audience you want to reach. The best ads connect on an emotional level, are simple and transparent, and provide a visual balance that makes viewers want to learn more.

Best Practices

- Tie in the product image with the copy.
- Provide text that is clear—let them know what you want them to do.
- Use 20% overlay or below the image.
- Don't cloud the image with the text.



Ad with <50% text

Ad with <20% text

Putting it all together



Connect with your consumer

The image is the first thing you see – make sure it catches your consumer’s imagination.



Connect with your product

Use simple, small product images and logos to make connections to your products. Leave room for engagement and storytelling.



Connect with your copy

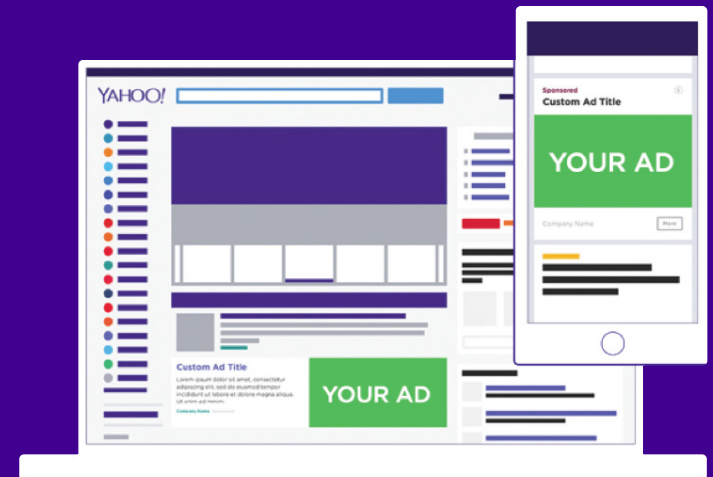
Copy is a core element in driving the emotional engagement of the Image – it can be emotive and informative, or when over-done can be off-putting.

About the author



Patrick Salmon

Patrick Salmon has developed extensive search and native advertising expertise after more than eight years at Yahoo. He currently manages search and native creative strategy for the education and travel verticals, in addition to global teams in the Asia-Pacific Region. He oversees a team of search and native strategists that help top advertisers on Yahoo Gemini optimize their accounts for maximum performance. He holds a BA from the University of Washington.



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