

Driving Conversion Through Better Brand Communication

Grow your business with tangible communication guidelines that are grounded in consumer psychology

In today's crowded marketplace, we all face the same challenge: *how do we attract and convert shoppers?*

Tapping into consumer psychology can be an effective way to tackle this challenge. Leading companies, like Google and Unilever, have used SKIM's Psychological Distance Theory to improve product messages, visuals and concepts. The theory, developed in collaboration with bright minds at the psychology department of New York University, is the foundation of our actionable communications guidelines. Understanding the theory and implanting our proven guidelines can help your brand more meaningfully connect with your customers and drive conversion as a result.

SKIM's Psychological Distance Theory

Different levels of psychological distance alter people's perception of reality. Lower psychological distance allows people to focus on your product or service concretely instead of abstractly, giving them a clear and tangible idea of what they are going to get. This impression, ultimately, allows the customer to "experience," rather than see, the product.

Since people often form a mental image of the product experience and emotional state they desire, it is pivotal for a brand to use its words and visuals carefully to paint a picture that brings to life the mental image the customer has in mind.

In other words, reducing psychological distance helps create a match between what the brand offers (projected product experience) and what the customer wants (desired product experience). This, ultimately, leads to a more meaningful connection with your customer and affects their behavior in ways beneficial to your brand.

How do you apply this theory in your brand communication?

Our guidelines provide an overview on how to successfully accomplish this with tangible and easy steps.



SKIM's Communications Guidelines

Messaging



Be specific

Being specific in describing how the customer will be better off from using your product or service helps customers create a concrete mental representation about your offer and its benefits. This reduces the perceived gap between what you offer and the customer wants, and significantly increases your chances of converting them.



Use simple words

Simple and unambiguous language is required for most customers to understand what is being said. Without comprehension, there is no meaning and without meaning the probability to successfully project a tangible brand promise is limited. Avoid jargon.



Be positive

A customer's desired end state is always positive, so using a positive tone of voice is key. A negative tonality could create a distortion between the positive image people have in mind and the promise projected by the brand.



Cue senses → more insights on senses on p3

Use words that encourage mental imagery by triggering memories, emotions and reactions linked to sensorial cues stored in memory. Examples are *imagine, taste, enjoy* - or words that are direct references like *soft, creamy, silky*.

Visuals



Focus on the product experience

To connect with your audience, they need to experience the product. To achieve this, the product experience and its related benefits rather than the product itself, should be the hero of our visual.



Draw people into the narrative

Creating a sense of motion through dynamic imagery is key as people are programmed to subconsciously finish the motion on display. Other ways to draw people into the narrative are by creating interactions (touch) with the product or giving the illusion of sound.



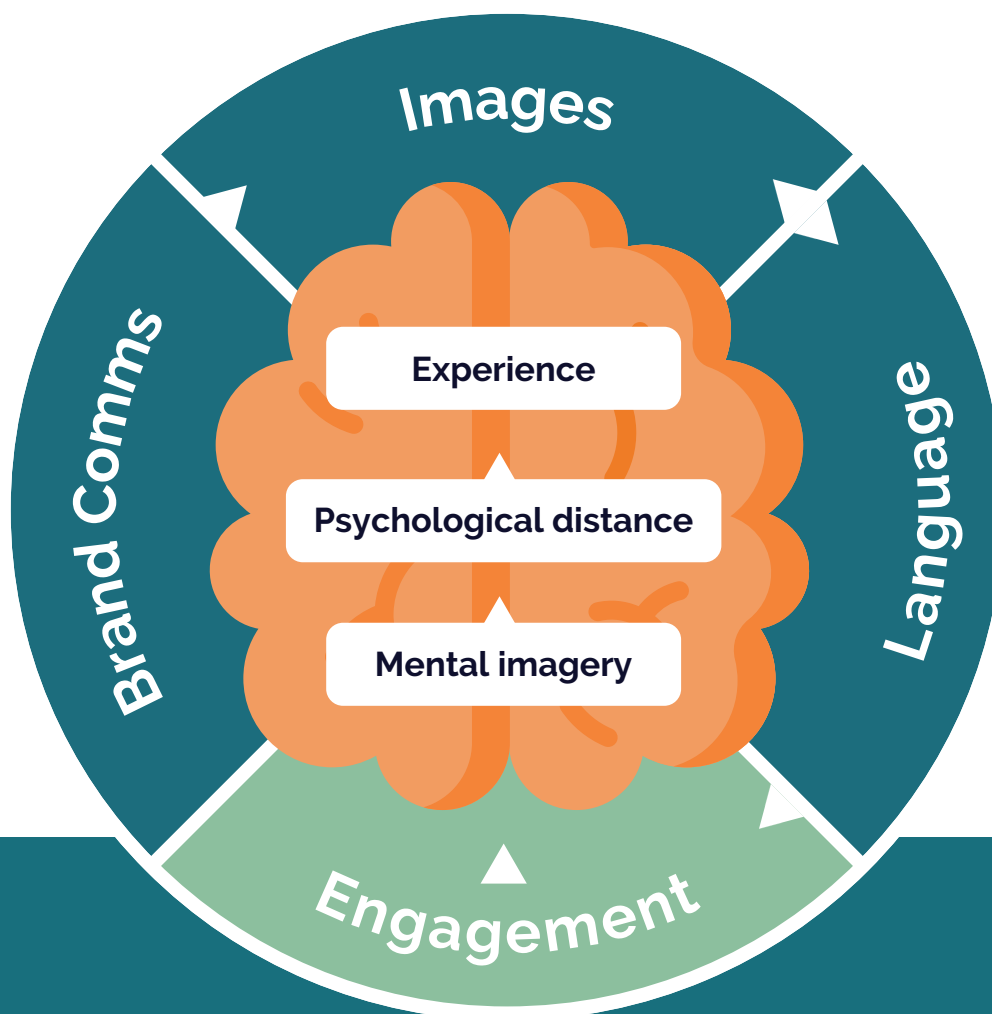
Bring things to life by cueing senses → more insights on senses on p3

Bring to life what you want people to taste, feel and hear by triggering sensorial cues stored in memory. For example, an image of a flower to trigger the imagination of a scent, or an ingredient to trigger fresh taste perceptions.



Stay positive and respectful

Keep in mind what desired product experience we are bringing to life and who the audience is. This means using positive imagery to connect with positive aspirations and not use images that could be offensive in any way.



Brand communication

Brand communication with **sensory appeals**, through images and language can enhance customer engagement by subconsciously triggering memories, emotions and reactions linked to sensorial cues stored in memory.

Mental imagery

This engagement can lead to the creation of **mental imagery**, which allows the consumer to imagine how a product and its related benefits look, feel, taste, sound, or smell.

Psychological distance

Mental imagery then alters perceptions of **psychological distance**, which is the term used to describe how far away people think an object or event is.

Experience

This, ultimately, allows the customer to **"experience,"** rather than see, the product in the ad, which can help generate desirable product judgments and match customers' desired end states.

Theory and guidelines in action: Driving eCommerce Success

Challenge

Increase click through and conversion rates online

SKIM partnered with Qoo10, a leading eCommerce site in Asia, and Singapore's #1 online shopping destination, to test our psychological distance theory. The hypothesis was: lower psychological distance would lead to higher click-through and conversion rates.

Insights approach

Test impact of visuals through DigiShop™ and real-life platform implementation

First, our DigiShop™ technology was used to replicate Qoo10's mobile shopping app to conduct virtual shopping simulations with mobile shoppers. Experiments were conducted for shampoo and chocolate snacks. In both experiments, the images of five separate brands were changed to represent different levels of psychological distance.

In both categories, the new images strongly outperformed traditional pack shots in terms of click-through and add-to-basket rates. The images with the lowest level of psychological distance were most effective with lifts in the 20-40% range.

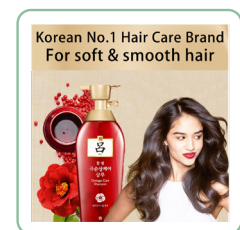
Curious which words and visuals had the biggest impact? [Read the full story here](#)

Business outcomes

Up to 64% increase in page views and 40% increase in sales

After these encouraging results, the actual Qoo10 platform was used to test our theory in a live eCommerce setting. Qoo10 replaced the images for several shampoo brands to determine how accurate the experiment results were compared to actual online sales. The in-market results were in line with our simulated shopping experiments and even resulted in 64% more page views and 40% more sales for the best performing image.

high distance



low distance

Overcoming eCommerce marketing challenges

“It was very shocking to me that when you start to actually invest in the image quality, there was a huge improvement in sales,” Cho said after seeing the real-world results. “Under the old paradigm we focused on media spend while under the new paradigm, we focus on the thumbnail [product] images to actually increase the outcomes of the ad campaigns. With the same amount of ad spending, we could easily see 2 – 3 times more conversion.”

 Hyunwook Cho, founding member of Qoo10

About SKIM

SKIM is a global insights agency helping leading companies thrive by understanding decision-making. Our consultative research team specializes in the area of brand communications. Our consumer psychology-based frameworks enable us to guide our clients through the process of content generation, selection and optimization before, during and after the research is conducted. Combined with innovative, mobile-first research solutions like UNSPOKEN®, DigiShop™ and DigiFeed™ we can help you understand the subconscious decision-making processes of the brain and drive your business forward.

Find out more at skimgroup.com/brand-communication