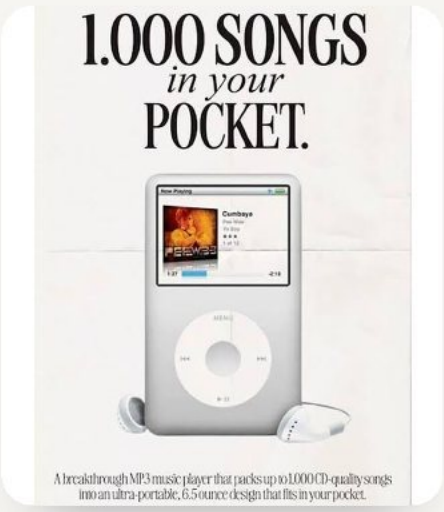
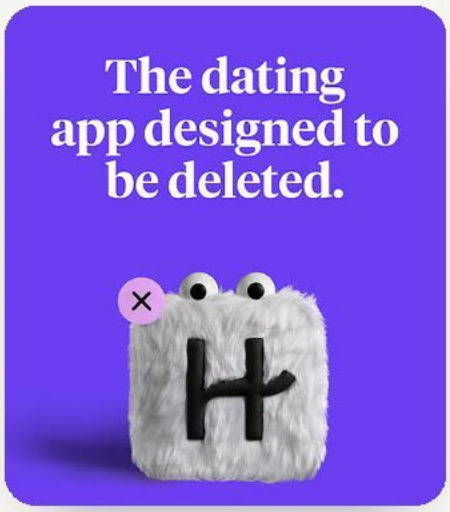
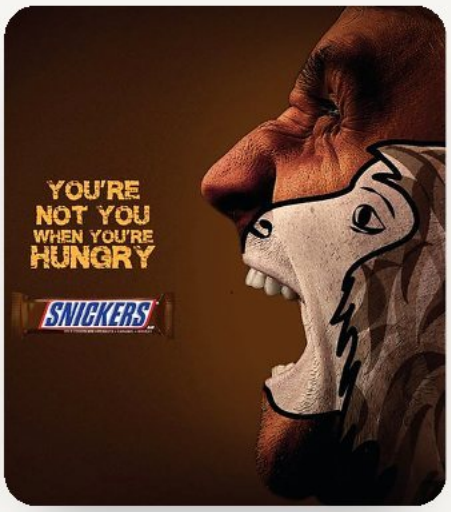
7 ADS · 3 TESTS

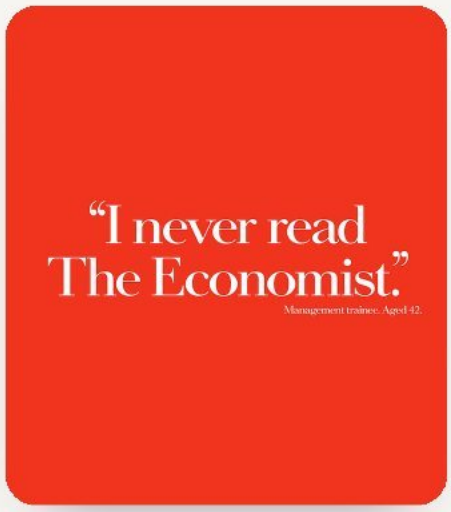
7 ads that said more in a few words than most brands say in a year.

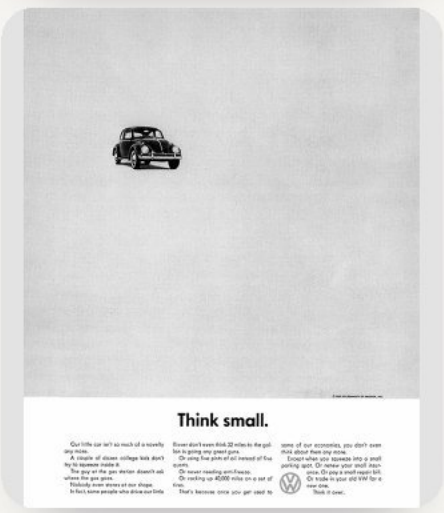
Decoded with the 3-question test I run on every line I write.

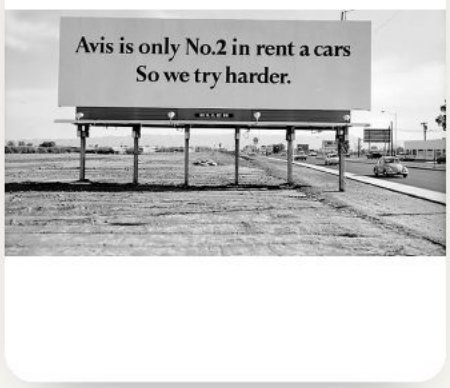




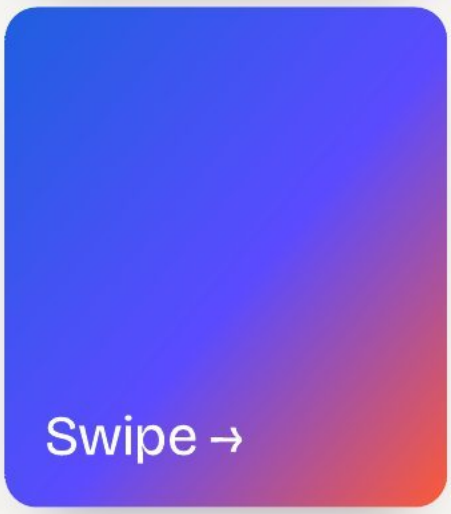












THE METHOD

Every great line passes 3 tests.

Borrowed from **Harry Dry** of Marketing Examples.
I run it on every headline before it ships.

01

Can you picture it?

If the reader can't see it, they won't remember it.

02

Could it be proven false?

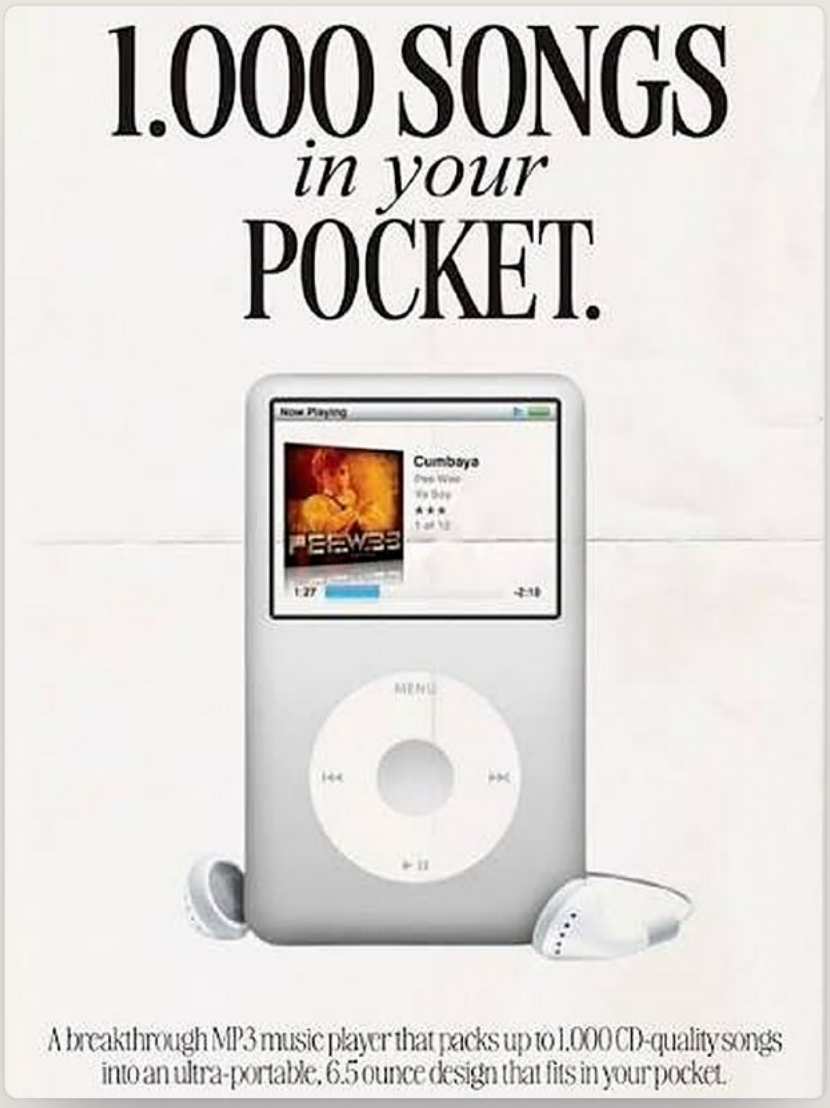
Real claims can be checked. Fluff can't, so nobody believes it.

03

Could only you say it?

If a competitor could sign it, it isn't yours.

WATCH Seven famous ads. Every one of them **passes all three.**



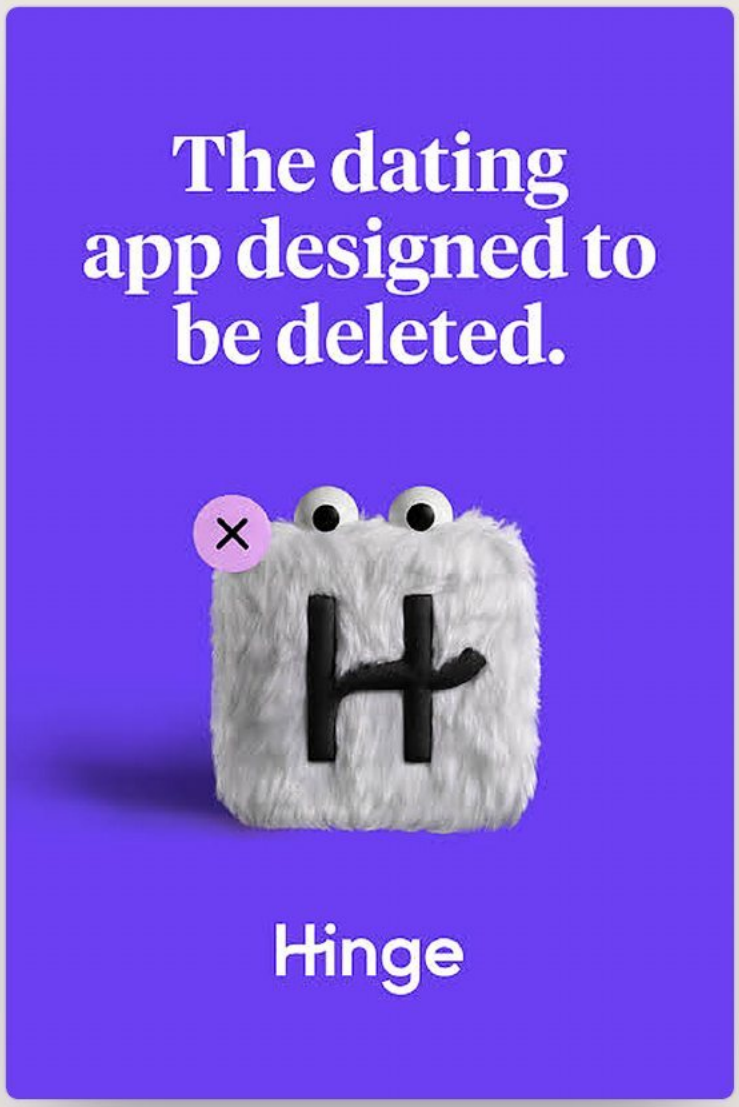
Apple

iPod tagline, 2001

Picture it?	Your whole music collection, sliding into a jeans pocket.
Provable?	Count the songs. It either holds 1,000 or it doesn't.
Only them?	Everyone else sold gigabytes. Apple turned the spec into something you could feel.

STEAL THIS

Don't sell the spec. Sell what the spec lets people do.



Hinge

Brand campaign

Picture it?	You, deleting the app, because you finally met someone.
Provable?	Either people leave in relationships or they don't. The promise is measurable.
Only them?	Rival apps make money when you keep swiping. None of them would dare say this.

STEAL THIS

Promise the outcome, even if it costs you the user.



Snickers

Print campaign

Picture it?	The 4pm version of you. Teeth out, patience gone.
Provable?	It names a feeling you can test the next time you skip lunch.
Only them?	A dense bar of peanuts and nougat can own hunger. A light chocolate can't.

STEAL THIS

Sell the problem you fix, not the product.



The Economist

Print campaign

Picture it?	A 42-year-old, still a trainee. You see him instantly.
Provable?	The claim underneath is checkable: readers get ahead, non-readers don't.
Only them?	Only a brand sure of its readers' status could mock the people who skip it.

STEAL THIS

Let the reader finish the joke. No picture needed.

Volkswagen



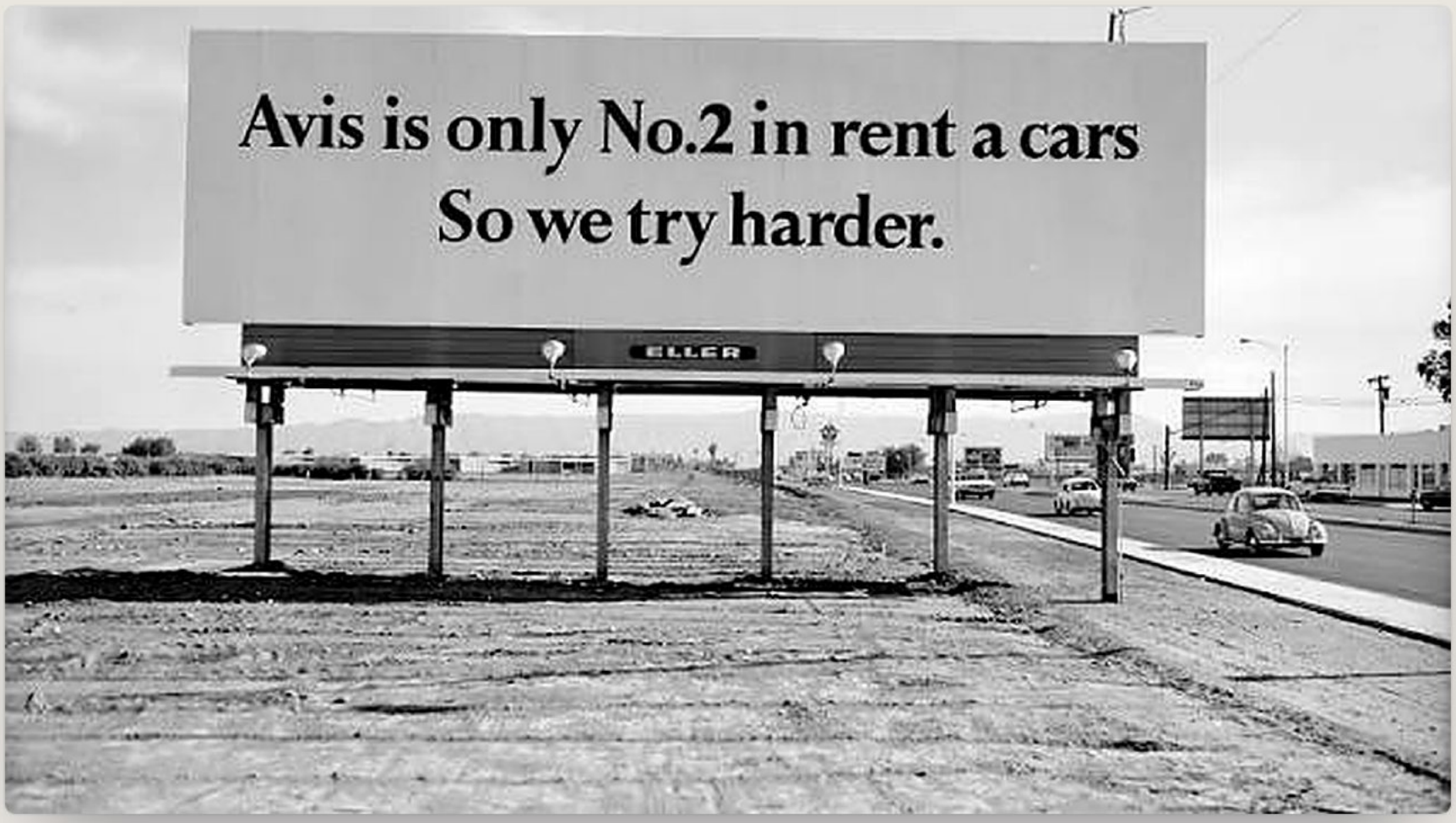
Volkswagen

Beetle print ad, 1959

Picture it?	One tiny Beetle in an ocean of white space.
Provable?	32 miles to the gallon. 40,000 miles on a set of tires. All in the copy, all checkable.
Only them?	In the age of giant American cars, only the Beetle could turn small into a boast.

STEAL THIS

Turn your weakness into the headline.



Avis

Billboard, 1960s

Picture it?	The underdog behind the counter, working twice as hard for you.
Provable?	Avis really was No. 2, behind Hertz. Anyone could check.
Only them?	Only the actual No. 2 can say this. The leader never would.

STEAL THIS

Admit the obvious. Honesty is a position.



Tesla

Model S print ad

Picture it?	By the time you finish the line, the car's already at 60.
Provable?	0 to 60 in 3.1 seconds. Grab a stopwatch.
Only them?	It turns reading the ad into a test drive. Only a car that fast can make your reading time the claim.

STEAL THIS

Don't describe the claim. Make the reader feel it.

YOUR TURN

Now watch a boring line fail all three.

BEFORE

"Quality products for modern living."

✗ Picture it? Picture what?

✗ Provable? "Quality" can't be checked.

✗ Only them? Every brand on earth could sign it.

AFTER

"Keeps chai hot for 12 hours. Even through a Mumbai commute."

✓ Picture it: a steel flask on a local train.

✓ Provable: pour it at 7am, drink it at 7pm.

✓ Only them: built for its buyers, not "modern living".

Fictional flask brand, used for illustration.

RULE Specific is the cheapest way to sound **believable, memorable and yours** at the same time.

SAVE THIS

Run your tagline through the 3 tests.

01 Can you picture it?

02 Could it be proven false?

03 Could only you say it?

FAILED ALL THREE?

Relax. Your CMO wrote it, not you. Follow me before they write another one.

One ad decoded every week. Cheaper than a rebrand.