

FINANCIAL POST

Friday, April 23, 2010

Viral popularity pushes Doritos brand

Financial Post

This effort from PepsiCo Canada brand, Doritos Viralocity, is a follow-up to the successful Become the Doritos Guru contest last year, where the snack brand asked Canadians to name an unidentified flavour of its chips and create and upload a 60-second online video about the new flavour. The winner, Doritos Tablet, was deemed the "most viral" using social media measurement tools. But are consumer generated ads good for the brand? The Ad Missions panel takes a crunch:

Victor Barac is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

The winning entry of the Doritos Viralocity advertising contest appeals to a broad range of impulses, high and low. From the opening seconds, when the word "sexy" unexpectedly slithers from the lips of the grey-haired Doritos executive, you're hooked. Setting aside the powerful connotations of young men comically eating oversized triangle-shaped Doritos tablets, what this ad successfully achieves is to share another joke with everyone weary of all the hype surrounding the cult of Internet technology. Fake testimonials, expressed in the latest "connectedness" lingo, are nothing short of big winks to the audience. With "Doritos 2.0" this ad pokes fun at techno culture, while retaining its symbolic meaning as something new and groundbreaking. The fatuousness of applying the "2.0" paradigm to Doritos chips will not be lost upon the young men who I am presuming will be the most avid consumers of the famous snack food.

Andrew Simon is senior vice-president and creative director at DDB Canada.

When it comes to marketers willing to invite consumers in to be a part of the brand conversation, to this day, the talkers dwarf the doers. But what makes this Doritos effort so impressive is not simply the fact that they're soliciting public entries. It's the simple but clever twist that the winner is based on a point system built on the entrant's ability to activate their own social network. When viewing the ultimate winning video, I'm sure many will have an "is that it?" response. (Attention, fellow professional ad people: Your jobs are safe.) But then again, sour grapes are really not the point. Through this effort, Doritos has been able to generate serious engagement in the brand experience. And while I'm sure there are many at the ad agency that would give their black beret to be able to name and promote a new Doritos line extension, fair is fair. And this one is an unequivocal success.

Lyle Goodis is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates.

My take on consumer-generated ads is that they are a nice fad that likely will fade away in a while, although there will always be cute, inventive and interesting efforts on YouTube and other social

media sites that will grab eyeballs. Pepsi may be thrilled, but most clients will eventually realize that not everything can "go viral." Clients will either kick their ad agencies' butts asking, "Hey, why didn't you guys think of that!" or realize that most of these efforts do not optimize their brand's positioning and drive sales--that they just drive more viewers to watch the spots, which is not the business goal. Consumer-generated spots may get the contest winners job interviews and save production dollars, but this is short-term thinking. Doritos Tablet is a cute big idea and gives you a smile or two, but won't hold up for too long. Eventually Pepsi will need to rethink this creative strategy.

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FINANCIAL POST

Friday, April 9, 2010

Mr. Sub goes back to the 1950s for its selling future

Ad Missions

Financial Post



Screen shot

These newest ads for Mr. Sub by Toronto-based Metrick System re-voice 1950s educational films for an amusing effect. But will they help sell sub sandwiches? The Ad Missions team takes a taste test.

Victor Barac is a cultural anthropologist specializing in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity

I cannot recall the last time TV made me laugh so much as the series of Mr. Sub ads from Metrick Systems of Toronto. Black and white instructional films from the 1950s are used as a vehicle to highlight the variety of offerings with cleverly overdubbed dialogue. In one ad a young woman interviews for "a mind numbing entry-level job," while in another, a young man's self-confessed "inner stirrings" for a female classmate elicits "maybeyourshorts are on backwards" and "you'd better have that checked" from his buddies. As far as advertising genre goes it's nothing new. What sets these ads apart, though, is that the brand is integral to the humor and not a peripheral afterthought to a self-indulgent creative process, as is the case with so much advertising nowadays. It makes one want to go out and buy a Mr. Sub just so they'll keep sending their business to Metrick.

Lyle Goodis is president of Torontobased marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates

With Quiznos and Subway Sandwiches regularly spending massive amounts on in-store, new product launches and multimedia campaigns, Mr. Sub has got to try to be very different and yet still engaging and relevant to its customers. Using yet another ad agency, they are trying to carve out a clear message with a light, old "rip-omatic" footage tactic. This creative approach may be a bit cute and certainly is different. But something is missing after you see the spots a few times. Perhaps mouth-watering new sandwich ideas, or a real innovative media strategy, or even a new health claim would help. To me, it goes stale fast. I'm not convinced that this approach has stamina nor, critically, the ability to trigger greater demand and help drive bodies in the door.

Andrew Simon is executive creative director at DDB Canada

Given all the controversy surrounding their 2009 "No One Likes Surprises" ad campaign, it's no surprise at all to see Mr. Sub embracing a wholesome approach this time around. Referencing the brand in the heart of the work is a refreshing change from the standard let's-save-the-product-

mention-for-the-last-four-seconds approach. And instead of blending in, the chosen 50's style production technique certainly will help it stand out. That said, while the purposely misdubbed dialogue allows for wonderful creative opportunities, the writer in me (and the 'Whose Line Is It Anyway' aficionado) wants to rewrite these spots in order to up the funny/entertainment/relevance factor and increase the chances for sparking consumer conversation. While I'm sure these productions were quite cost effective given their use of stock footage, I find them too heavy on style (technique), and too light on substance (idea). And that leaves me hungry for more.

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FINANCIAL POST

Friday, May 7, 2010

Negative Nancy has company on Lay's chip taste test

Ad Missions

Financial Post



Screen shot

It's another taste of chips this week for this Ad Missions gang in their final round of reviewing before FP Marketing ushers in another group of critics. This campaign for Lay's is from BBDO Toronto for PepsiCo Canada's Frito Lay division, and works off of the strategy that family-sized "multipacks" of the snack offer "fun in every pack." The ads might be another story.

Victor Barac is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

Frito Lay's recent series of half-minute chip commercials are designed to highlight the convenience afforded by their new "multipack" packaging. This single message is effectively delivered with a large dollop of silliness. After all, what could be less serious than a potato chip? In one ad, an embattled woman attempts to drive a bumper car out of a cramped elevator while the voice-over announces, "It's hard to fit fun into a small space, but we did it!" While the new packaging is highlighted to good effect, these commercials fail to establish a deeper connection, even at a subliminal level, with the historical dimension of the Frito Lay chip brand. This is probably due more to brand management than to advertising production. And even the lowly chip may have a venerable history worth remembering.

Andrew Simon is senior vice-president and creative director at DDB Canada.

As this is my last ad review for the foreseeable future, I was really looking forward to going out in a blaze of positivity. I certainly don't relish the role of Negative Nancy, but alas the advertising gods, that fickle bunch, were not smiling down on me as the Lay's multipack work landed in my inbox. Strategically, the idea of "fun in every pack" seems rich territory. But unfortunately for me, that's where the fun ended. For all the possible scenarios, I feel like a dad stuck on a climbing wall and a bumper car in an elevator don't live up to the promise. And the somewhat irreverent back end, with its infomercial underpinnings, makes the whole thing feel quite Frankensteined together, including the pairing of two very different styles of humour -- one more slice of life, one more exaggerated.

Lyle Goodis is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle

Goodis and Associates.

Lay's potato chips-- hmmm, hard to have just one, I guess. These spots are nice, light little snacks, and they do convey a sense of fun with some smile-inducing creative twists. The family-pack idea is a good product bundle, and should sell well at retail. But my sense is that Frito Lay could and should plow past the focus groups' blah comments and go much further on this theme, perhaps really grab viewers' attention. They seem to want to reach out past chip-munching teens and kids to the time-and-attention poor meal-planning moms and food shoppers in the marketplace, to really push the creative envelope and still stay on strategy. Frito Lay and BBDO may be planning that soon, and if not, they should.

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NATIONAL POST

Friday, March 26, 2010

If only we could figure out who Hyundai's target audience is

Financial Post



Screen shot

This ad for the Hyundai Elantra by Bensimon Byrne featuring a woman who leaves a love note on another woman's car got a fair amount of attention south of the Canadian border for its "liberal" attitude towards sexuality -- will the Ad Missions team find it progressive, or puerile?

• **Victor Barac** is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

A sexy young brunette approaches a parked black Hyundai Elantra, pulls out a note with a phone number written on it, imprints it with her red lipstick lips, and leaves it on the windshield. A second later a sexy young bleached blonde picks up the note, looks away knowingly, smiles, and gets in the car. Oh, all the unanswered questions! Was the note intended for the blonde's boyfriend? Perhaps it was for her brother? Is this a case of mistaken identity? Or, maybe, the girls are lesbians? The one certain thing about this ad is that the Elantra gets buried by all the sexual innuendo. Aside from the colour, not a single quality of the car gets highlighted, or even alluded to. The creative department surely had loads of laughs making this commercial but I'd be surprised if it improved Hyundai's bottom line or the Elantra brand by even a scintilla.

• **Andrew Simon** is executive creative director of DDB Canada

Let's play a little game. When I say "sexy, hot car", you say _____. If you answered "Elantra," either you've lived an exceptionally sheltered life or you are an incredibly loyal Hyundai employee. In fact, this particular communication would have us all believe that this vehicle is the ultimate chick magnet, an aphrodisiac for curvaceous, attractive lesbians everywhere. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth -- the product truth, that is. As a result of the questionable strategy, the whole message rings hollow, and the particular product and company featured are easily forgotten. Who was this supposed to appeal to? The gay market? Hormonally challenged boys? Hormonally challenged men? Perhaps all of the above. As a side note, it should be pointed out that Hyundai is no longer with the ad agency that created this ad thanks to everyone's old friend, "global realignment." This spot didn't cause the ad agency to lose the Hyundai account ... but it certainly couldn't have helped.

• **Lyle Goodis** is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates. This new TV spot for Hyundai goes one step forward and one step back. Interesting idea

and quality execution. I believe that many viewers will get a small chuckle or break a smile from this idea, perhaps even "get it" fully and remember it for more than a few days. But is it truly memorable? No. And like all effective and smart communication, does it drive home the message of who the advertiser is, what is being promoted here and why you should drop the remote control, get off the couch and check out this car as soon as possible? My guess is no. Finally, who remembers which model of car this is, or any remarkable features and special offers here that are worth exploring? Anyone? Bueller? Good luck with your new agency, Hyundai!

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NATIONAL POST

Friday, January 29, 2010

BBDO ad goes for test drive

Financial Post

The "Invisible" TV spot for the Mitsubishi 2010 Outlander by BBDO Toronto proved so popular that it was picked up by the auto-maker's U.S. division for use across North America. The commercial begins by showing a variety of invisible people engaged in activities such as skateboarding, with only their clothing and shoes indicating their presence. One couple's bodies finally emerge when they enter the roomy Outlander. The Ad Missions panel took it for a test drive.

- **Andrew Simon** is senior vice-president and creative director at DDB Canada.

Car advertising can be tricky business. Especially when it comes to the wonderful world of television. Clients typically desire as much sheet metal as thirty seconds will tolerate as well as high production values, regardless of budget challenges. This Mitsubishi spot is a valiant effort to deliver the goods, all nestled in a warm idea cocoon. I'm impressed by the creative technique and the vehicle looks darn good, which is key to the concept itself. But for me the issue isn't where they ended up, it's the proverbial road they decided to drive on in the first place. The strategy of "standing out" is not new in the world of car advertising, the most recent example being Audi and their every-other-car-looks-the-same campaign. To put it another way, ironically, standing out in this instance may likely have the opposite effect --leaving this spot, well, invisible.

- **Victor Barac** is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

This ad provides a good example of how visual gimmickry interferes with a brand's promise. "Stand out," as the slogan proclaims, is exactly what the 2010 Mitsubishi Outlander does not do here, save for its bright red colour. What does get the attention instead are the invisible people milling about a busy city street, detected only by their shoes, eyeglasses and hats in life-like motion. They are way more eye-catching driving invisible cars and motorcycles than the young couple who become visible once they climb into their Outlander. One strains to find the connection between the ad and the brand in this case. What, exactly, is it that distinguishes the Outlander from other SUVs? The rather bland sound-track, the song M.A.G.I. C by Swedish wimp-pop duo The Sound of Arrows, contributes little to making the Outlander stand out from the crowd.

- **Lyle Goodis** is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates.

Overall, the TV spot named "Invisible" for this "completely redesigned" Mitsubishi Outlander lives up to its name--in the crowded TV wasteland, it is invisible! They seem to want push the neat little invisible world of people, daily life and other vehicles out there, yet I see no big, category-breaking

difference in their product versus a RAV-4, CR-V, or even Tribute or Forester. If you want to demonstrate all these new features, then really show and tell us! Most of the spot is taken up by clever tech-film tricks and not their product. Three key new features are called out with supers briefly, but the basic product looks like all the others. As well, Mitsubishi has named this product Outlander, which sure sounds like its competitor Toyota's Highlander. If there is little brand heritage in the name, they should have considered a new name and totally new positioning and TV creative strategy approach too. Otherwise, this campaign effort feels totally "me-too" and invisible for me!

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NATIONAL POST

Friday, February 26, 2010

Message of Samsung ad seems a little fuzzy

Financial Post



Screen grab

Olympic spirit is red hot on the ice, most particularly when it comes to hockey. Our Ad Missions panel takes a shot on the Samsung Electronics ad by Cheil Canada and featuring Calgary Flames star Jarome Iginla.

- Lyle Goodis is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates.

This series from Samsung Canada is expected, but this spot confuses me. Is it a push for Team Canada, CTV hockey coverage, VANOC, a Bell spot, or what? I don't know it's from Samsung until the last few seconds, but it is not a smart teaser. Nice voice-over, script and music, but how does it build the Samsung brand? It has an OK "anthem"-type build to it, but there seems to be only about four seconds total that even shows the Samsung smartphone that they're trying to sell. What makes this model better/different/greater value than its competitors, and what is the big offer to get me to go check one out? None of this is covered and, frankly, does not change my behaviour or motivate me to switch phones. Any phone can tell you "Canada scored!" The challenge for any official Olympic sponsor is to try to find a very smart and creative balance between hard product sell and proclaiming -- "Yay, we paid a gazillion dollars to be one of the elite global players in IOC's inner circle." Well, as a Canadian consumer, does that motivate you, and do you even care?

- Andrew Simon is senior vice-president and creative director at DDB Canada.

In keeping with the Olympic spirit, I've decided that this review should climb aboard the positivity train and see things purely from a glass half-full perspective. With that in mind, I commend Samsung for supporting hockey and getting high-profile athletes like Jarome Iginla and Hayley Wickenheiser to be a key part of their efforts. As they move forward in extending the campaign beyond TV and the Olympics themselves, I'm sure Team Samsung will pay dividends. I should also point out that on YouTube, I discovered two of their viral ads that I found quite entertaining and I recommend giving them a gander. Interestingly, they're very different in tonality from the broadcast spot itself. Speaking of the TV ad, um, I like snow.

- Victor Barac is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

Samsung's entry in the crowded Olympic advertising stage gets points for both technical difficulty and style. This one-minute filmic masterpiece rouses a mix of emotions with its panoramic sweep of the nation. The prairie scenes in particular are eerily reminiscent of Kansas in *The Wizard of Oz*

movie. A subtle soundtrack infuses classic Canadian imagery, from hockey rinks, to snow-covered wheat fields, to windswept city sidewalks, with the spirit of the Vancouver games. The fascination factor of this ad is enhanced by the fact that it is none other than hockey superstar Jarome Iginla taking the opening shot and scoring the goal. But the novelty of emailing photos has faded somewhat in 2010, so in my opinion the "share the moment" slogan should have been quashed from the get go! Haven't we heard that one somewhere before?

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FINANCIAL POST

Friday, February 12, 2010

Good luck, little commercial, good luck

Financial Post



Frame grab from Second Cup's commercial, Little Bean

The coffee war just isn't letting up in Canada. An effort for the Second Cup chain from Riddoch Communications marks the first time in a decade that the company has done TV spots. The Ad Mission panel takes a swig. The verdict? Lukewarm.

Victor Barac is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

With their "Little Bean" television ad Second Cup promises the finest cup of coffee. This banal message is delivered with the most effective yet economical of means: a mound of coffee beans, a pair of hands clutching a coffee mug, and a cutesy voice-over congratulating a little bean in the mound that made the grade by getting through 112 taste tests. You can just smell the coffee and feel the warmth of the thick Second Cup mug! "You deserve a better cup of coffee." It's all done in 15 seconds. Under such time constraints, the ad makers chose to highlight the product's quality. I like this ad because it does so much with so little. It delivers a simple message with enduring images.

Lyle Goodis is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates.

I declare up front that I am a customer of my local Second Cup. I do happen to like their coffee blends, lattes, atmosphere and service. But these new spots leave me wanting...I want to smell, taste and savour the drink, especially after the deep voice-over tells me what this little bean has achieved to get to this final stage. While the final shot shows the logo big and bold, it fails to show us the java ... that's the real visual draw. The tag line "You deserve a better cup" is good positioning, especially as the retail java wars demand that each competitor strive for real leadership, every day. I'm not sure this campaign will help retain existing customers and/or draw new ones. So, good luck little commercial -- good luck!

Andrew Simon is senior vice-president and creative director at DDB Canada.

It's not easy being Second Cup. Like a family member overshadowed by a more popular sibling, in the world of high-end coffee chains, it plays Second fiddle. On the other end of the spectrum, it's feeling the squeeze from the likes of Tim Hortons -- not drinking it is cause for deportation -- and

marketing juggernaut McDonald's. So while I was pleased to see the brand use "rigorous testing" as its differentiator, the creative expression is only half-baked. A slow camera zoom on a pile of coffee beans is only engaging if you happen to be a coffee bean. And while there are traces of a brand voice, the personality is not yet fully formed. Perhaps other aspects of the brand experience -- the retail environment, for instance -- will push this quality proposition to new heights. But if the oh-too-generic 'Coffee Experience' card I received in the mail the other day is any indication, there's still a tall mountain of coffee beans left to climb.

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FINANCIAL POST

Friday, March 12, 2010

Wind puts the lie to the three-year contract

Financial Post



Screen grab

These ads by Clean Sheet Communications for Wind Mobile might have taken on a whole new meaning this week after a report from SeaBoard Group slammed the upstart cell provider owned by Globalive Communications Corp. for a hasty launch, spotty network deployment and weak wireless coverage. Is the marketing effort full of hot air? The Ad Missions panel takes a look.

- **Lyle Goodis** is president of Toronto-based marketing communications group Lyle Goodis and Associates.

I do like the whole launch campaign by Wind Mobile: fresh, nice, light brand design and intelligent, clear, creative. And most importantly, it gets the issue of three-year contracts right out on the table for us all to unwrap and examine. Hmm, why am I paying to lock in for three years? What real value do I get? (We know what Bell and Rogers get!) The spots for "hot dog" and "sidewalk tolls" are well done -- quirky, smart, docu-style, and stand out in this busy category. I believe that if Wind can maintain high service and coverage levels, with the same smartphones that the others have and customers desire, then the campaign should deliver prospects. Now it is Wind's job to over-deliver on service and delight us all.

- **Victor Barac** is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in brand strategy, corporate culture and identity.

Absurd! That's what the advertiser wants you to think with this quasi-candid camera spoof filmed at select city bicycle racks. Bewildered riders are taken aback when approached by a uniformed man asking for money to lock their bikes up for three years. Absurd, yes! But no less absurd than getting locked into a three-year mobile phone contract. With this one-message ad, Wind, a new player on the mobile phone scene, fails to take advantage of the 45-second spot by not defining its brand more substantially in contrast to the competition. That you don't need a compulsory service contract to get Wind service may not be the positive feature that defines the brand. Wind could have appealed to a more brand-appropriate set of persuasion triggers but chose to go with a fatuous though effective aesthetic. What sticks in my mind is a squat guy in a uniform bugging people in the street, not Wind Mobile.

- **Andrew Simon** is executive creative director at DDB Canada.

Whether it's politics or business, one of the keys to successful communication is establishing a consistent narrative. Say what you stand for, make it relevant, and stay on message. Wind Mobile, you've done this school of thinking proud. 'The Power of Conversation' is a potent conviction and the fact that, like MyStarbucks before it, Wind solicits and shares consumer feedback online, it's not just talk. Admittedly, I was a bit worried when I saw the cinema effort, those 'brave young architects of change.' Earnest? Self-effacing? It was all a bit schizophrenic. But the viral films have renewed my faith, telling a tighter story and speaking in a more consistent, savvier voice. Using extra hot dog fees, sidewalk charges and locked up bikes to showcase the Wind Mobile difference is inspired thinking (but be sure to watch the extended versions that don't include the overbearing and dissonant "Canadians want change" voiceover.) Keep up the good work, Wind Mobile. Viva la dialogue.

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