

The new Absolut World Campaign

The new Absolut World campaign was in one respect a sharp break from the old bottle series. It incorporates impossible images that invite the viewer to imagine a more perfect world: an obviously pregnant man, a politician giving a speech who is growing a Pinocchio-like nose, and Times Square filled not with garish neon and video screens but rather gently illuminated artwork. The viewer is invited to think of an Absolut world as a sort of perfection that won't happen. The unspoken message is, "You'll never see Times Square like this, but you CAN appreciate the perfection of Absolut."

Comparing the two campaigns, though, the common neuromarketing characteristics are quite remarkable. Both series offer startling and novel visual images that are definitely hard to pass by in a magazine or on a billboard. Both series require the viewer to decode the image in some way and will result in a similar, "Aha! I get it!" reaction. Neither campaign is overly puzzling or problematic, but both contain information that that requires a bit of cognitive processing. That differs from a spirits ad that might just show the product being enjoyed by attractive people in an upscale environment; in that case, most of the cues (attractive man, sexy woman, expensive restaurant background, waiter in a tuxedo, etc.) are meant to be processed unconsciously.

The difference between the two Absolut campaigns is simple and logical. The bottle ads served to establish the Absolut bottle as an instantly recognizable icon. The premium quality of the product could be established only indirectly by using high quality, creative artwork and occasionally through the subject of the artwork - a custom swimming pool in the shape of the bottle, for example.

As long as the bottle campaign ran, it may have reached a point of serious diminishing returns - the brand was established, the bottle shape was iconic, but there wasn't an easy way within that campaign to further enhance the brand image. This was confirmed in the Ad Age article by Ian Crystal, Absolut's brand director, who said, "A lot of our key numbers had been flat or declining."

The Absolut World campaign didn't need to establish the brand or packaging, so it could focus on the message that Absolut vodka is the closest thing to perfection one can find in this world.

I remain a bit sad that new Absolut bottle ads aren't being created, but I commend Absolut and TBWA/Chiat/Day for simultaneously breaking with tradition while still maintaining some of the key elements that made the past campaign so successful

Sources :

http://www.futurelab.net/blogs/marketing-strategy-innovation/2008/02/why_the_absolut_campaign_switc.html