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EDITORIAL

Have you ever heard of the expression "Negative Advertising"? Probably not because we just created this expression for the purpose of this article. Negative advertising is the art of gradually turning potential customers against the product or service you are trying to sell them.

The media in which negtive advertising florishes the most are radio and, above all, television, particularly in sponsored programmes where the sponsors feel that their advertisement, repeated over and over again every 5 to 10 minutes, is of more importance to the viewers than the programme itself.

If you love watching sport on TV, you are a prime victim to this negative advertising. The worst affected sports would easily be tennis and boxing where the advertisers can sneek in the same message every 3 to 4 minutes between games or rounds. It is so bad that some sports can now only be enjoyed if they have been taken on video first so that you can fast-forward the advertisements. And even then, these boring, repetitive advertisements take too long to play through.

It is high time someone should make a study on the subject by taking a viewer who is well disposed towards the product or service you are offering. Bombard him with the same advertisement 10-15 times per hour and check how long your friendly viewer remains that way. See how his interest in your product or service starts gradually turning into indifference, boredom, resentment, anger, disgust and finally into total rejection.

So why would advertisers spend huge sums of money to turn their customers off their products? Simply because they have been bamboozled by their advertising agencies into believing that the customers must be beaten into submission by a barrage of advertising until they finally capitulate. You see, it is easier and more profitable for advertising agencies to produce only one advertisement and have it run a hundred times, than having to produce 4 advertisements and run them only 25 times each.

Somewhere, there must be a fine line between the customer's acceptance of an advertising campaign and its rejetction and a survey would show after how many advertisements the customer's brain turns off, after which any more money spent is not only a total waste but increases the resentment against the product or service offered. The survey would also reveal at what stage the customers start feeling that if the product or service in question requires so much advertising to promote it, it cannot be much good anyway.

Actors and film stars have also fallen into this negative advertising trap. No matter how popular they are and how good the advertisement is, if you have to watch the same actors presenting the same products every few minutes on your TV screen, you get totally fed-up with them. Such over-exposure has ruined the career of many of them. They should ensure that an anti-over-exposure clause is put into their contract if they value their future career.

If negative advertising of services or products is bad enough, its cousin, the negative self-glorification advertising is even worse. If you are a subscriber to Sky Television, you would have come across this form of advertising in its worst form. CNN, the world-wide network that provides you with 24 hours of international news every day, does a tremendous job. But why on earth do they have to tell you every few minutes how fantastic they are, that they are the only network that can give you such a service, that they are the best in the world, unsurpassed, unequaled, and on and on it goes. What a waste of time instead of getting on with the job of providing the news. It is self-glorification of the worst kind. After all, Sky Television did not come to you automatically. You had to make the decision to subscribe to it and to have it installed, so you were already sold on the idea in advance. Therefore, why keep hammering into you the virtue of their services to the point where you get really fed-up with them?

Imagine you purchase a new car. Beforehand you made a thorough investigation, you finally settle for the car that suits you best and you are quite happy with it. Now how would you react if every time you opened your car door, a mechanical voice told you what a good car you had bought, that it was the best in the world and that you are very fortunate to be allowed to drive such a fantastic car. Soon you would get fed-up with this continuous reminder and switch to another car.

If you are reading this article, you obviously like your Helvetia magazine. But what would you think if at every turn of the page you were told that the magazine was the best little pubication in the world and that you were very lucky to be allowed to set your eyes on it. You would soon get bored with it and eventually throw the magazine into the wastepaper basket without even opening it up.

Trade magazines often fall into this trap of self-glorification. There was once a travel trade magazine whose sole purpose seemed to be to ensure that the picture of the president of a certain Association appeared at least once on every page of every issue. Apart from being absolutely pathetic, it was a pity that the president in question did not have the guts to tell the editor to stop this nonsense, unless of course he enjoyed this misplaced self-glorification.

This is the very reason why you will never find the picture of your Editor in your Helvetia magazine. He prefers to keep you guesssing as to how young and good looking he really is.....

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