

Is it advertising or advertainment?

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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Am I living in hope that, unlike in previous recessions, this time round the advertising industry will give some thought to what needs to be done to bring relevance, accountability and return on investment to what they do?



Talk to any client, big or small, and they will tell you that the cost of advertising has risen to the point where CEOs and FDs are wanting serious answers about where all the money is going.

Perhaps a good place to start would be for agency bosses to find out how many of their strategists and creatives actually ever sit down in front of their TV sets and watch a whole evening of programmes? Or, read newspapers, listen to radio stations and page through magazines that aren't particularly aimed at them?

Ploughing money

I don't believe they do and neither do their bosses, because just about all the ad agency and media buying house MDs I talk to these days tell me that it is a huge problem getting creatives, strategists and media buyers to watch, listen to or read the media into which they are ploughing their clients' money.

And not just to do this once or twice, but regularly.

But, the purpose of my wanting them to sit down and watch an evening of television - and preferably not their favourite channels - is not just about understanding the medium but also to wake up to a phenomenon that is inexorably manifesting itself on our TV screens.

It is the metamorphosis of our advertising industry into an advertainment industry.

Oh, by the way, I am talking about those commercials that bang on for 29 out of 30 seconds and then almost condescendingly identify the advertiser in the very last second.

Finding more and more

I'm finding more and more people who email or phone me to tell me about an ad they'd seen, telling me the same story.

"Did you see that great ad? Wow, it was fantastic, the lighting and photography was just phenomenal etc etc. Heck it was hilarious... No I can't remember what it was for but, wow, it was a great ad..."

I listened to yet another radio talk show on advertising recently and it was the same thing. Caller after caller waxing lyrical about the wonderful ads they'd seen. I actually kept count for an hour. Exactly 70% could not remember what the ad was about, what it was selling or what the brand was.

Another 20% remembered quite definitely in their opinion what the ad was selling but got the product or brand wrong.

Don't make viewers guess

Which left only 10% actually knowing what the ad was all about. Only 10% of people who had not only noticed an ad, but also watched it, absorbed it, got excited about it and then went to the trouble of phoning a radio station to talk about it.

Now just what could be the motivation to go this strategic and creative route, I wonder?

Is it pandering to a client ego that requires his or her peers to gush over his or her creative genius? Is it agency profiteering from naive clients with expensive ads, with the bulk of the budget going on production and very little on flogging the product or service?

Is it branding gone mad? Chasing awards perhaps? Or, is it a desperate attempt to break through the increasing clutter and get noticed by viewers who are becoming increasingly distracted by all sorts of time-consuming things other than watching ads?

Of course, I am generalising. There are some very good ads out there. There are agencies doing some great work.

But, there is an enormous amount of absolute crap. Money-wasting rubbish

Precious

Oh, I know those legions of oversensitive and precious people in the ad industry will just think that I am being overly critical. But, this isn't at all about what I think. It is about the fact that eight out of every 10 people who phone in to radio talk shows and enthuse over their favourite ads have no idea at all about what their favourite ad is representing, selling or promoting. No idea at all.

Surely, that should worry the hell out of anyone in the ad industry right now?

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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