7 Reasons People Hate Your Ads — and What to Do About It



Accepting these hard truths will help you create better, more effective ad campaigns.

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Working in marketing can feel a bit like being an embarrassed teenager: You think everyone's looking at you, but in truth, nobody cares. Marketers spend their entire lives crafting advertisements, while average consumers spend theirs trying to avoid them. There's a clear disconnect regarding the whole enterprise's assumed worth, but before you lament, it's not all bad news. By accepting this reality, i.e. people hate ads, we can begin to make better, more effective campaigns. Here's a list of reasons why people hate typical ad campaigns,

in the hopes that it will help you cut through the noise and connect with potential customers in a more meaningful way.

1. Lack of trust

In general, people don’t believe what brands have to say. This is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the advertising industry today. After all, trust is the cornerstone of any healthy, long-term relationship. To quote former Unilever CMO Keith Weed, “A brand without trust is just a product, and advertising without trust is just noise.” Consumers have always been mistrusting of advertising and brands – that’s their default position. But now, skepticism has given way to full-blown disbelief and a crisis of trust. Against this backdrop, brands can no longer buy attention as they used to in the old advertising model. They must earn it. This can be done by being honest, transparent and reliable, first as a company and then in their messaging.

2. Ad fatigue

One recent study concluded that the average American, for example, is exposed to anywhere between 4,000-10,000 ads per day. But volume isn’t the only problem, as ads are becoming ever more intrusive, inescapable and noisy due to advances in technology and data science. People are constantly bombarded with digital junk, triggering ad fatigue and banner blindness. Everywhere we go, we’re greeted by unwarranted ads – tags and cookies follow us from place to place – insisting we buy things we’ve already bought or have no intention of buying. A surplus of bad advertising is overpopulating people’s screens and feeds. It’s no coincidence that people are turning towards ad-blockers and premium, ad-free platforms. Blasting people with targeted advertising can lead to short-term results, but often at the expense of long-term brand building. A good rule of thumb is Les Binet and Peter Field’s 60:40 brand-building

to sales-activation ratio.

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3. Quality of the creative

Online advertising is also responsible for the decline of creative output. The 1960s-’80s represented the golden age of advertising. You only have to look at “Think Small” by DDB, “Just do it”, by Wieden+Kennedy or “Buy the World a Coke” by McCann Erickson to understand the true power of creative advertising. What these ads had in common was a big idea, and in today’s world, big ideas are far and few between. The Google-Facebook duopoly is forecasted to control 70 percent of the UK digital ad market by next year. Most, if not all, ads on these platforms prioritize reach over relevance, channel over creative and data over gut feeling. We could probably learn a thing or two from the golden age.

4. People power

At the same time, we’re experiencing a fundamental shift in the power relations between brands and people. In the past, consumers had no choice but to pay attention to what brands had to say across a handful of radio or television channels. Today, every single Instagram page or Twitter account is a media outlet in its own right. Social media has democratized share of voice; people are no longer passive consumers, but creators in their own right. Consumers are now dictating when, where and how they engage with brands, and they are beginning to use this newfound power to voice their concerns and boycott brands that don’t share their values and belief. With that in mind, marketers should place greater emphasis on creating brand advocates who amplify its message to friends, family, colleagues and even strangers.

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5. Poor customer experience

Creating an epic ad campaign is pointless if you're promoting a bad product or poor customer experience. Nowadays, the vast majority of consumers will read a review before making a purchasing decision. Having a seamless customer experience can be a powerful point of differentiation in a digital world where services constitute 69 percent of global GDP. T-Mobile illustrated this through its "Un-carrier" strategy, which ensures customers talk to real people, as opposed to insentient chatbots. As a reward, T-Mobile's apology credits went down by 31 percent, lost customers went down by 25 percent and net promoter score went up by a whopping 56 percent. The definition of marketing has changed, and an ad is more than just a slick promotional video. It's the sum of each and every consumer touchpoint. Therefore, creating a satisfying customer experience should be seen as a marketing investment and not a business cost to be minimized.

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6. No value add

The majority of advertisements prioritize the needs of the business above that of the consumer. That's understandable, to a certain extent, since marketers have to meet strict KPI quotas. The easiest way to achieve these targets is by spending the marketing budget on a call to action tied to the objectives in question, although that can also be short-sighted. Before activating any future campaigns, it's worth putting yourself in the customer's shoes by asking: What do I get from this? Too often, the answer is zilch. Marketers can add value in a variety of ways. First, by informing people of

a need that can be met or a problem that can be solved by the brand. Second, by providing a source of entertainment. Don’t forget, ads can be fun or funny. Third, by taking action to ease the social and environmental issues facing people and the planet.

7. Woke-washing

The latest addition to the list is woke-washing: ad campaigns that promise to improve the world without taking any real action. Today, a growing number of companies are jumping at the chance to signal their social and environmental credentials. And for good reason, as purposeful brands have been reported to grow twice as fast as their competitors. The allure of economic gain is making purpose the new marketing tactic of choice through campaigns that are long on talk, but short on action. Woke-washing is already making consumers wary of brand purpose. Recent examples include SSGA’s Fearless Girl, Burger King’s “Blue Meal” and Boohoo’s recycled range. In a time when consumers can Google what your brand stands for in a matter of seconds, making false claims just doesn’t cut it anymore. It only serves to erode trust in marketing, when it’s already in short supply.

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