

Is it advertising? Is it advertainment? Or is it...?

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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I wonder how many advertising strategists and creatives actually ever sit down in front of their TV sets and watch a whole evening of programmes?

I don't believe they do - and neither do their bosses - because just about all the ad agency and media buying house managing directors 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.

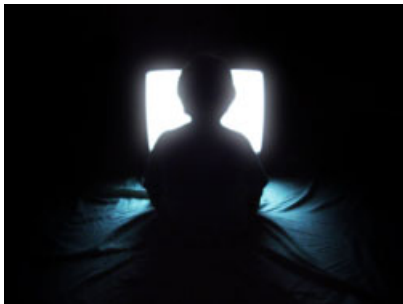
And not just to do this once or twice, but regularly.

But, the purpose of my wanting them to sit down and watch an evening of television and preferably not their favourite channels, has got nothing to do with understanding the medium but everything to do with waking up to a phenomenon that is inexorably manifesting itself on our TV screens.

Metamorphosis

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

One has to be pretty blind not to see what is happening.



Nice ad... but what was the brand? (Image: Aaron Escobar, Wikimedia Commons)

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

"Did you see that great ad? Wow, it was fantastic and the lighting and photography was just phenomenal etc etc. 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 a while back 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.

This left only 10% actually knowing what the ad was all about. Only 10% of people who had not only noticed and 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.

Is it branding gone mad?

Now this was not an isolated case. I listen to many radio talk shows on advertising and recently the incidence of callers not being able to identify ads they liked so much has increased alarmingly.

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

Is it pandering to a client ego that requires his peers to gush over his 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 actual flighting?

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?

Let's be blunt - there's a lot of crap out there

Is it a coincidence that this situation seems to be getting a lot worse just as we see adspend growing after all those years in the doldrums? Are ad agencies so very busy right now that they don't have the time to really think about what they are doing?

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.

Oh, I know those legions of over-sensitive 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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