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A Generic Eye-Catching Experience

Dissolve's "This Is a Generic Brand Video" advertisement doesn't advertise a product. It doesn't advertise a company or a place, a person or even a government-sponsored warning. Dissolve is advertising an idea. From the sarcastic tone speaking overly casually, to the stock footage, to the quickly changing, relatable topics, their ad effectively captures what's wrong with not just our businesses, but our society. The ad is a testament to the average joe and how irrelevant the torrent of advertisements flooded upon him really is.

All around us, businesses are fighting for attention. There are hundreds of thousands to millions of potential customers in one city alone, and for every one of those, there are thousands of businesses trying to reach them throughout the day. Being constantly bombarded by ads and grabs for attention, it becomes easy to start categorizing ads and finding similarities. To grab – and hold – our attention becomes more and more difficult as the audience grows. More and more, our businesses try to shout over each other, clamouring for our focus. More and more, the advertising moves away from being informational and toward being eye-catching. At what point is it worth paying attention at all?

Dissolve's ad pinpoints this trend and takes it to the extreme. The visuals of the ad are all meant to appeal to the viewer, featuring grand views, someone performing an intriguing action, and precious moments we can relate to. Each image stays for no longer than a few seconds before the next one appears, giving us something new to digest before we've even begun

processing the previous one. With about 75 of these images in approximately two and a half minutes, there is plenty to keep our interest while watching. However, it is no coincidence that the ad is entirely stock footage. This is the type of content we can expect to see in many ads, and too often, none of it is actually relevant. Was it really important for me to see that mountain? Did that family give me any more insight into the product? Why am I wasting my time watching footage that doesn't have any chance of improving my life? There are so many opportunities to include useful footage that can show answers to questions about the product rather than tell them, but those opportunities are often left woefully underused.

The meat of the ad comes from the ongoing voice-over. From the first sentence, the narration is dull, as if the speaker has done this hundreds of times before. Throughout the ad, he relates the footage to an aspect of the business in a sarcastic, uninterested tone. On top of referencing what's going on in the video footage at that moment in time, he attempts to spin these ultimately irrelevant pieces of footage as justification for why the business is good. As an eagle makes its way on screen, "But we also do business in the USA." However, the voice-over is a bit more two-faced than that. In addition to being an advocate of the business, he is also an advocate of the viewer, protecting us from the business doing all it can to make itself look good, lacking the motivation to actually **be** good. "But we also do business in the USA... or want you to think we do." There's always more to the story than first appears, and businesses are good at taking advantage of this.

Recently, EA launched their newest game, "Star Wars: Battlefront II". Due to unprecedented levels of locking core content behind either dozens of hours of gameplay or the spending of real-life currency to speed up the process, fans became outraged. Upon EA's community team posting a reply to one particular Redditor's post, their response was taken very

poorly, quickly surpassing the most downvoted comment in Reddit history many times over (“I paid 80\$ to have Vader locked?”). At close to 700 000 downvotes, this is a significant portion of what EA can expect as total number of sales for this game, and that 700 000 comes from Reddit alone. Following the launch, EA cut the cost of unlocking this content by 75%, but also cut the currency given as a reward from the main campaign by 75% (O’Connor). At face value, the company has listened to the fans and compromised on their problem with the game. However, with a more fair look, EA also made up for that reduction elsewhere, almost negating the advertised change. Of course the reduction in earned currency wasn’t advertised. It’s plain to see that the perception of the game and business is more important than a good product. With this having happened, how should EA advertise this product as Black Friday approaches? Is a happy customer enjoying a good product more important, or strictly whichever option makes the most money? There’s a good chance EA’s profits will still be at least as good as they expect. At that point, what motivation is there for the customer to be well-informed of the product?

Ads sound sincere on the surface, but when going deeper, it’s all marketing tactics. The truth is that perception of the product and the business is more valuable than the product itself. Many will argue that Apple has operated this way for years, and has had great success in doing so. Owning the latest iPhone isn’t just about having a better phone, it’s about having the newest one, and Apple is very careful to keep their brand pristine and high-class to continue that perception. Businesses put our perception of them and the product ahead of making the product the best it can be. After all, businesses primarily exist to make money. This horrible prioritization impacts the customers negatively most of all, but still manages to give the biggest benefit for the business. In practice, our society gladly puts itself into this situation, buying into products that could be better and not considering the reasoning behind businesses acting the way they do. Our

society has driven itself to favour less innovation, mindlessly supporting businesses before stopping to think whether they really have our best interests at heart.

Dissolve's ad is the message to the brainwashed masses to open our eyes and minds. Better improvements to our lives start with us demanding them. Businesses can afford to not dramatically improve their products because they work well enough for us to buy. All it really takes is catching our attention. Whichever brand sticks in our head wins. If it's satisfactory, it's not worth the trouble and risk to switch. It all starts with getting us to notice their advertising, not proving to us that their product is the best it can be. This ad caught my attention after sifting through dozens of others, unimpressed. Through all of the falsely impressive visuals, the bored tone, and the voice telling the whole story, it all seemed strangely familiar. Looking at how businesses advertise, it's no surprise. The ad is a narration of our life as we encounter thousands of distractions competing for a moment of our time. Watching it through we know we've seen all of this before, but the voice-over sheds a new perspective. The absence of a product means that we can focus on the idea it conveys. As we go about our busy lives, we can look at the business and advertisements around us and open our minds. Take a second look. Really consider which products we buy because we truly believe it's the best for us, and which we buy without much thought. Before we buy a product, we can stop and reflect on the true message we're sending when we buy it. Before we blindly accept what's fed to us, we can take a moment to question whether there's a bigger picture. By sending businesses the right message, we can give them reason to create something truly exciting to advertise.

Works Cited

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