

# What makes a beer worth drinking?

Well...the flavor of course! But how do you even try a beer you haven't tasted before? Recommendations from friends and bartenders, magazines and ADVERTISING. Case in point, Stella Artois, a Belgian beer with a long history. If you've ever gone to an independent or art house movie theater, you've probably seen Stella Artois advertised. These commercials usually have no talking, and feature Old World settings. Generally, the idea of most of them is that you would always rather have Stella or that you won't give up your Stella, no matter what. I saw one on cable television recently. It showed two robbers who have just dug their way to a pot of money. They toast with Stella Artois, and while they are doing this, the pot of money catches fire. For a split second they consider using the beer to put out the fire, but think better of it. Moral: no amount of money is better than a nice cold Stella Artois.

Demonstrating the power of persuasion, I was faced with a choice of beers recently that included Stella. I had to try it. After all, they claim it would make me happier than a pot of money. (It was fine, I would drink it again, in case you are wondering.)

Bottom line is that this advertising is effective because it has a very specific point shown in outrageous ways. It also uses the images to convey a European/historical feel for Stella Artois. In my opinion, this type of advertising is far more persuasive than the American beer advertising we see for the big companies like Budweiser and Michelob. In any case, the taste of those beers speaks for itself.

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# Update: New Book about Drug Marketing

Marketing really has driven the drug business says Melody Petersen in the new book *Our Daily Meds*. Review can be found in today's Washington Post, link here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/03/AR2008040303377.html>

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## Drugged Up

Drug advertising, by its nature, is full of pitfalls. Obviously, drug companies that advertise are pushing their medication. One problem is that many of the medications are expensive (generally, they are still under patent and not available in the generic). Another problem is that advertising, even with all the small type, can't address all the pros and cons of drugs. We've all seen or read the ads for drugs, "which may cause side effects such as nausea, headaches, drowsiness, lethargy, cancer, etc." Also, patients are now armed with the brand name of a drug and can inquire about it directly to their doctors. Drug companies spend millions on research and development, so they then spend millions on marketing to make sure the drug sells before its patent expires. But the biggest problem with this massive marketing is that not all of these drugs are safe or effective

The latest drug to be exposed is Vytorin, a cholesterol medication. According to news reports, studies have found that

Vytorin is no more effective than other cholesterol-lowering drugs available in the generic. Remember, generic is usually cheaper. Schering-Plough, the makers of Vytorin, have actually had layoffs and a reorg. However, today, there was a full two-page spread in the Washington Post for Vytorin. On the one hand, I understand why they do it. On the other hand, it seems like they think that readers of the Washington Post would dismiss the findings of the study simply because of a large ad in the newspaper. The ad does not address the findings, but really, how could it? Vytorin's USP (unique selling proposition) is that it addresses two sources of cholesterol. So this ad continues to tout this two-prong approach even though it is not better than statins at lowering cholesterol.

We are a free society and a market-driven one at that. However, marketing for drugs that have potential complications or don't work as well as advertised does need to be regulated. Public health is at stake. And I, for one, do not think the bottom line trumps health and wellbeing ever.

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## **Musically inclined**

Have you heard of Yael Naim? No? You probably have heard her song New Soul. Let's say if you watch any TV at all, and have seen the commercials for MacBook Air then you have heard it. It seems Steve Jobs personally chose her song for the commercial and it has now propelled the song, and Naim, into new popularity. Anyway, her song is catchy and has a very specific sound that has helped brand MacBook even further. Apple has been using music in their commercials for a long time—sometimes using previously lesser known artists like Naim, and sometimes using megabands like U2. Their strategy seems to be working. If you ever walk past an Apple store, you

will notice that it is NEVER empty. People respond to music and when U2 appears in a commercial for iTunes, people listen.

But how many advertisers can afford to pay U2? Not many. So is this a level playing field? No way! For instance, there are many MP3 players out there and the most popular is the Ipod. I would argue that some MP3 players are better or have more features than an Ipod (and are certainly less expensive) yet Ipod rules. In my opinion, this boils down to having Apple, its advertising agency, and a big budget behind it.

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## More evolution

Update to post below—Advertisers are turning to gaming online. Read this article in the New York Times:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/business/media/01adco.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/business/media/01adco.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

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## Ever Evolving

We all know how much the Internet has changed the way we do business. We no longer fax or express mail—we email and upload instead. When I started working at an advertising agency way back in the early '90s, we were still faxing signed insertion orders and overnighting ad films! And boy, could that cause problems, especially when publishers didn't get materials by deadline. The panel I mentioned a few posts back, about the Internet and politics, discussed how much the Internet is

affecting campaigning and public opinion. But for our purposes, what is really changing is the whole scope of marketing communications.

First, traditional broadcast or print ads are just not enough. All ads and printed materials today point consumers to a website. The website has to be good and has to be UPDATED (I can't stress that enough). But that is not yet enough. There are online ads—banners, AdWords on Google, search engine optimization. There are email campaigns. Because of the search for more targeted media, marketers have turned to all sorts of social media. Groups on Facebook/MySpace and the creation and posting of events. In the media relations field, we've seen a rise in subscription newsletters such as Daily Candy. So now PR practitioners send their materials to traditional and online media, and some also to major bloggers (not me, not yet anyway).

But what is really interesting is that because everything that is on the Internet is available to anyone without a blocked Internet connection, anywhere, at any time, what is said about a company, organization or even an individual, is out there, perhaps even permanently. This is the reality of the Internet. Remember how Tylenol had a problem with tainted medicine or Odwalla with tainted juice? Those cases have made it into print, but can easily be found today on the Internet. You think the Southwest issue with the cracked fuselages has to make it into print to affect their image? No. It was reported by all media, who then post it on their websites, and even though I haven't researched it, I would bet that the blogosphere discussed it. In fact, even if something is in printed format, there are many databases out there that could be accessed (some for a fee of course) that would give you a nice PDF of whatever information you are seeking. That type of searching used to be limited to scholars or journalists on a mission and with an expense account.

The newest issue then for marketers is to limit the damage or

correct the image whenever possible. There are positions now such as "Social Media Manager." Here's a link to a blog that explains [this](http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/03/23/the-need-for-the-social-media-manager/)  
<http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/03/23/the-need-for-the-social-media-manager/>

In fact, this blog has received comments from such people. These people work for a company, like Comcast, and they scour the Internet for any mentions of their company. They then work to correct the mention or work to diminish its impact. See the comment to post We Shall Overcome immediately below.

In sum, with the Internet, the job of a marketing manager has become both easier and harder. We can collaborate more easily and we can find what we need at lightning speeds, but now we have a huge, not easy to control mass medium that knows no borders. Marketing managers today have to be concerned about image both on and off line. Big job!