

Dissonance

American Airlines says it knows why we fly. In any case, “we know why you fly” is their tag line for the current ad campaign. The campaign shows people traveling for various reasons, most of them to do with going to visit family or going on vacation. It seems somewhat dissonant that if American knows why we fly, and its all feel good, and they are the company that takes us where we want to go, when we want to go, that they now turn around and start charging ridiculous fees (like \$15 for your first checked bag, each way). Also, they are planning to cut back routes as well. Dissonance is just that—something is said or done that does not jibe with reality. There is a tremendous amount of dissonance in other advertising too. Like McDonald’s aiming for the healthy market or something. The truth is that American has to make the public feel like it cares about them. Because everyone who has flown knows the reality is far from rosy. We’ve been packed into flights that are often delayed, and given an option to buy crappy sandwiches if there is food at all. Once we get to our destination, we may or may not see our luggage. These days, to be a passenger takes a lot of stamina. You have to put up with security at the airport and lousy service on the airlines. But, as American knows, we are flying to go on vacation, to get away , to visit loved ones. So they cling on to that notion in their advertising. Maybe it isn’t dissonance at all—maybe it is cynicism. Since they know why we fly, they know we will put up with all sorts of crap.