

Super Thoughts

First off, go Cardinals! Super Bowl 43 is on.

From what I have seen so far, here are a few predictions (about the ads)

Movies will be big—they have already shown a trailer for a movie opening in August. Movies do well in recessions.

Saving/Smart/Value/Solid—all touchwords for tonight

Enjoyment will be a theme

Another theme: Get ahead if you can, in spite of the economy (Careers.com, Monster.com and Avon will carry this message)

We are a scrappy people (continuation of above).

We'll see lots of commercials for beer. (No duh)

Super Ad Twitter

I don't really care much about the Super Bowl this year, although I will probably be rooting for the Arizona Cardinals. However, I do care about the most expensive ads on TV. So, I will be Twittering on Super Bowl Sunday. Follow me at twitter.com/dbmc

On Monday, I will post a round up.

Have a happy weekend!

Speaking off the cuff

Sometimes speaking your mind, especially when you are in the public eye, is not a good idea. Media trainers really hate the idea of their proteges saying whatever comes to mind, and for good reason. President Obama may have just learned this the hard way. Yesterday, prior to talking about the economic stimulus package, he “joked” with reporters about how Washington, DC is not as tough as Chicago when it comes to snow. I saw the exchange on live television, and I thought to myself that some people (namely Washingtonians) would be insulted by this. Sure enough, the comment was carried on tons of Internet sites like DCist, WJLA.com, and even on the network news. Some people did not see what was so funny about icy, slippery sidewalks, especially when they figured the President does not have walk outside to get to work at all.

Of course, of all the things that Obama could have said, this was not close to being the worst. However, it should teach him that nothing is off the record and that joking comments are not always seen as such. Obama has been in such a bubble of adulation that it was almost refreshing to see people bristle at this comment. He will have to adjust to the idea that people will be listening to his every word, and many will be looking for missteps and mistakes.

So to wrap up PR 101—don’t speak off the cuff, ESPECIALLY if there are journalists in the room.

Too sexy for TV

No, this isn't about about Paris Hilton's Carl Jr.'s commercial or about Janet Jackson having a "wardrobe malfunction." Instead, it is about PETA's new commercial promoting vegetarianism, because, get this, it leads to better sex. NBC has effectively denied the commercial the right to appear during the high-stakes Super Bowl. I found out about it on CNN's Headline News, which gave the commercial lots of free publicity, and maybe, that was the whole point.

I am not sure where to start on this one. First of all, NBC's shows are full of sexual innuendo and actual sex talk, so I am not sure where NBC thinks it is drawing the line. But then, there is the commercial itself, which shows women flouncing around in skimpy underwear holding (and caressing) vegetables. I get it. The Super Bowl is seen by a bunch of men who love to see attractive women in various states of undress. GoDaddy certainly ran a fairly racy commercial showing some nearly-naked woman. But then, I don't get how showing women as sexual objects furthers PETAs cause. I am not sure that beer-drinking, nacho-devouring men watching the Super Bowl are suddenly going to give up the tailgate burgers and steaks because being veggie is sexy.

I am not sure which irritates me most: NBC's false sense of "morality," especially in light of its programming, or PETA's decision to use sex, and sexist visions of women to sell their message.

See the commercial and commentary [here](#).

Thoughts?

Too much information

You know how you recoil when someone starts telling you much more than you want to know about his or her personal life? We call it TMI, and there's a good reason for it. We don't need to know EVERYTHING. We understand that some things just are better kept private. Well, apparently the folks at Pfizer in charge of marketing Celebrex do not believe in TMI. Currently, Pfizer is running a really long (at least 1 minute) commercial for Celebrex, airing on the ABC World News with Charles Gibson. It goes into way too much detail about the RISKS of Celebrex, and other NSAIDS. You may recall that NSAIDS have been linked to heart problems. This is not the first time that Celebrex goes this route. Last year, they ran a two and a half minute commercial, in the same, graphic style (no actors, just voice over).

The problem for me is that the message is lost. In fact, I am not sure what the message is meant to be. Is it to recap the various risks of NSAIDS? Is it to say Celebrex is just as risky as other NSAIDS? The commercial mention benefits, but I didn't see those communicated clearly. That is why I think this commercial is faulty...it doesn't make me want to consider Celebrex (not that I need it, but that is another issue). As a marketing professional, it makes me question Celebrex's savvy.

Judge for yourself. Here's a link to the commercial on the Celebrex website: <http://tinyurl.com/26cqok>

Shelter magazines

I have never been a huge fan of shelter magazines, mostly because they make me feel very inadequate in both the decorating and housing areas. However, they are usually at least inspirational...some day, maybe, I will have the taste and the money to decorate my house with shabby chic or whatever. However, I may lose inspiration (and jealousy) because many shelter magazines have ceased publication, including *Home and Garden*, *Oprah at Home*, *Martha Stewart Blueprint* and others. The article in today's *Washington Post* blames low ad revenue and not declining circulation. So folks, we have our answer to the print question. It is all about advertising. Advertisers are cutting back on their print advertising budgets, and thus, magazines are dying. What this may lead to is a rise in advertising costs as fewer magazines are left to provide ad pages. Demand vs. supply. And then, fewer advertisers will want to advertise.

The dawn of a new (communications) era

One of the first things that signaled the start of the new Obama administration was the changeover of the Whitehouse.gov website. The new website, which shares many elements with the Obama campaign website, was up and running at 12 noon, even before the flubbed swearing-in took place. In a sense, the new website is the product of people who haven't been in the White House very long. It still has the campaign feel, talking about the Agenda, and showing the Whistle Stop tour Obama and Biden took the weekend before the Inaugural. What is more updated

about the website is that you can now sign up for email updates and like many other organizational websites in America today, it has a blog. And, as the website claims:

“WhiteHouse.gov will be a central part of President Obama’s pledge to make his the most transparent and accountable administration in American history.”

The website has been getting a lot of attention. Here’s an article from Politico via Yahoo on the presidential bios on the website.

Obama will certainly be a more “electronic” president. Much has been made about his BlackBerry “addiction.” He was able to garner much of his support among the GenY/media/social media savvy people because of his campaign know-how regarding Web 2.0. Let’s see how this plays out.

Update: Interesting takefrom the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on the PR skills of the new administration, helping create a positive perception, and apparently an area where Bush was not as media-savvy.

Trying too hard?

Inside today’s *Washington Post* not only was there a special “commemorative” inauguration insert, but another insert that is titled “Progress” and has today’s date on the bottom. You could be forgiven for thinking it is yet another adulatory piece about Barack Obama, due to the progressive, historic nature of his inauguration today. However, you would be wrong. It is about Audi, the car company. This insert tries to define progress for me—for instance, “Grown men spraying giant

bottles of champagne,” and “leaving behind yesterday’s idea of luxury.” These inane headlines are being equated to “progress is a woman dominating a man’s sport,” and most egregiously, to the idea that our country is finally embracing a person of color as president. Audi wants you to believe that the company is just as progressive as the United States. What exactly makes Audi progressive? That of course, is not answered.

I have seen lots of advertising that takes advantage of momentous events. Many companies advertise during special events in what is generally image advertising or brand-building. And I get that Audi is engaging in the same. However, I wonder what the strategy is. The insert, even though it is on newsprint and not glossy, is expensive. Audi is also running the same campaign online. So is the idea that people will buy today’s newspaper as a keepsake so they will also read the Audi ad? Is the idea to equate Audi with Barack Obama? In my opinion, this will fall flat. Like I said before, I don’t find evidence in the insert of Audi’s “progressive” nature. Also, people who buy the paper today will be totally focused on two things: information about the nuts and bolts of the inaugural and info on Obama. An extra supplement that is irrelevant will get thrown out.

Did you see this insert/campaign? If so, what did you think of it? Please leave comments.

UPDATE: Also, Audi sponsored Inauguration night’s NBC and ABC newscasts, so that they could be presented with limited commercial interruption. That’s a lot of marketing dollars...and again, is it worth it?

What is the future of print advertising, part II

We've established that advertising and publishing are symbiotic, right? Well, today I found more bad news affecting newspapers across the country, courtesy of Mediabistro.com.: The *Boston Globe* is cutting up to 50 jobs and the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* is filing for bankruptcy. This is a case where it could be the chicken or the egg. Did advertising drop and cause financial losses at the newspapers or did cutbacks and diminishing influence of print media lead to less print ad expenditure? Not sure which, but maybe a bit of both.

Of course, newspapers are still relevant. I would bet most people check out a newspaper every day, albeit, online. Perhaps we can brace now for an all electronic future.

What is the future for print advertising?

Obviously, 2008 was not a banner year for anyone, except maybe foreclosure specialists and some lawyers. It certainly was not a good one for print media. We heard of closures (*Christian Science Monitor* for one) and declines in subscriptions. Today, Folio reported that ad pages fell 11.7 percent as compared to 2007. Wow. As anyone who works in media knows, advertising is the lifeblood of publishing. No advertising, no publishing. Subscriptions and newsstand sales alone don't make up the income stream needed to publish a magazine. I am sure the cost of paper is up, as well as transportation costs. In short, as it has become more

expensive to actually publish the magazine, the main source of revenue has declined. To me this spells a tough year ahead for magazines in 2009. I think we will see more magazine closures and consolidations. Some may cut back to fewer issues per year. I think it will be worse for newspapers. A few days ago it was reported that the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* was looking for a buyer. If it does not get a buyer in two months, it will fold. This is the MAIN newspaper in a large city.

In short, I think the future of print advertising is less growth. I don't think it will disappear just yet, but I am sure online advertising will continue to grow while print advertising continues its decline.