

## **Fighting for Attention**

The average person is greeted every day with thousands of advertising messages from radio, television, websites, magazines, newspapers, and billboards. Sometimes we have lunch at restaurants with ads on their placemats (tacky) or visit restrooms with ads on the walls (even more tacky). Simply said, there is just nowhere we can go where someone is not trying to sell us something.

Each of these advertisers is fighting for our attention because rightly so – or perhaps as a survival mechanism – we have learned to shut most of the ads out. Some advertisers use humor to try to gain our attention, realizing that if they entertain us, we'll probably pay attention (like Geico). Others offer an image we find irresistible because it is so well done (like Apple). Still, others have learned that we pay equal attention if we are horribly annoyed. The best recent example of this is the series of commercials for Head On, apparently a headache relief product. In this commercial (on television) all you hear is a grating voice repeating “head on, apply directly to your forehead” over and over again. The ad does not say what the product is for, what it does, or how it works. It simply annoys its way into our attention.

Advertisers believe that once they have our attention – even when it is gained by negative means – they can then change our negative perception. Like a child who misbehaves for attention because he knows he can then promise to behave, these advertisers follow up their horrible ads with new ads essentially saying, ‘we know you hate our commercials, but you'll love our product’. Viewers, agreeing that they hate the commercial, somehow are prepared – like the parent of the ill behaved kid – to forgive.

Tudog doesn't buy into the “any attention is good attention” argument. Sure everyone is fighting for attention. And true negative attention does deliver some results. But taking a long term perspective, we believe that annoying ads turn off a lot of potential customers that will never use the product because they associate it with poor tactics, leading them to believe the product is inferior as well. Advertising is a reflection of our company, what we sell, and most importantly how much we respect our products. If we don't respect our products, we cannot expect consumers to be loyal to them.