IN THIS ISSUE

Emotional Marketing: Advertisers Target the Heart (Duration 11:57)
It's not new for advertisers to use emotions to sell products, but are they sincere or is it blatant emotional manipulation? The CBC’s Ioanna Roumeliotis catches a ride with WestJet's Blue Santa for the day to explore how storytelling and social media are reshaping advertising.

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VIDEO REVIEW

Before Viewing

In 2012, WestJet ventured away from traditional television advertising and made a short film where the airline treated weary passengers to an incredible Christmas flash mob. The campaign was a huge success, garnering 1.7 million views on YouTube and extensive sharing on social media platforms. Since 2012, WestJet has produced three more films, each one more ambitious than the previous. In fact, their 2013 Real-time Giving video was viewed over 44 million times on YouTube.

Social media and commercials
Have you ever watched a commercial on a social media site like Facebook? Was the commercial shared with you or did you click on the ad yourself?

Television commercials
Think of your favourite television commercials. Why do you like these commercials? What kind of emotional response did you have while viewing these commercials?

The WestJet Christmas campaign
What do you think of WestJet’s marketing strategy? At a glance, how effective do you think their short films will be in getting people to travel with them?

According to a 2014 Ipsos Reid poll involving 1,500 Canadians, 84 per cent said that — if price and quality were similar — they would switch to a brand that was associated with a good cause.

Viewing

1. What is emotional advertising?

2. In the introduction, News in Review host Michael Serapio says that WestJet is trying to brand itself as the airline that _____________.

3. What was the first miracle that WestJet Santa gave? How did Rene Gould’s family come to WestJet’s attention?

4. What was the goal of the WestJet campaign? How many mini-miracles were they hoping to make happen in a 24-hour period?

5. Why does WestJet marketing executive Corey Evans think that the mini-miracle campaign is as close as someone can get to reality TV?

6. a) What did WestJet do in previous Christmas campaigns?

6. b) How successful were the previous campaigns at drawing customers to WestJet?

7. What two nicknames have been used to describe emotional advertising techniques like the ones being used by WestJet?

8. How are companies using social media to expose their brand to customers? Why is emotional advertising so popular? How cost effective is this branding technique?

9. Why are the unscripted reactions of people receiving gifts considered advertising gold for the producers of the WestJet video?
10. Why did WestJet make a special point of giving a significant gift to Brent Ginther?

11. Where was WestJet Santa’s last stop on his cross Canada tour?

12. Why should we expect more emotional advertising social media campaigns in the future?

After Viewing

In an effort to escape mundane, traditional commercials that focus on nutrition, Quaker Oats decided to hire Toronto’s Studio M to help them create something new. Studio M was the outfit behind WestJet’s highly successful Christmas ads that took social media by storm starting back in 2012. This time producers hoped to tell a heartfelt story about a busy suburban family whose father and daughter team up to surprise the mother with a hastily (but professionally) arranged hip-hop dance recital in front of a crowd of 1 200 people. With six cameras trained on the principle players in the drama, Studio M captures the father-daughter dance and the mom’s emotional response to the surprise performance.

1. Watch the video on YouTube. Search: Quaker Oats: The Recital.

2. Describe how you felt as you watched the video? Did the story provoke an emotional response?

3. The video narration features sentiments about busy lives, family dynamics, and the bond between parents and their children. The video itself makes no mention of Quaker Oats products (though images of family members eating Quaker Oats granola bars are shown at various times) until, at the very end of the video, the Quaker Oats brand appears on screen with the slogan “Goodness Starts Today.” Are you more inclined to buy a Quaker Oats granola bar because you watched the video? Do you feel differently about Quaker Oats knowing that they went to such great lengths to share this story with you or do you think they are just out to make a buck? Explain.
THE STORY

Minds On

Work with a partner and discuss the television commercials that you like the most.

• What is it about these commercials that you like?
• Are you more likely to buy a product based on advertising you’ve seen or are you more likely to purchase something based on the quality of the product and the integrity of the brand?
• Are commercials simply entertainment or a source of inspiration to buy certain goods and services?

Seeking an emotional response

All advertising hopes to elicit some kind of emotional response from the person observing the ad. However, there is a new trend in the ad world that takes emotional advertising to a whole new level. Instead of preparing a traditional commercial, advertisers are making short films that tug on the heart strings of the viewer. To get these ads to customers, marketing companies are trying to stir up interest on social media. With a ‘tweet’ here and a ‘like’ there, companies are hoping long format emotional advertising is the next big ticket to engage consumers.

WestJet’s bold move

No Canadian company has done a better job of this than WestJet. The Calgary-based airline has done its best over the years to portray itself as a fair, friendly and progressive alternative to rival airlines. WestJet’s hope is that consumers see them as a company that cares about its customers by portraying a self-deprecating and fun-loving approach to the travel experience while simultaneously showing people that they are professional, safety conscious and affordable. In order to more deeply imbed this brand image into the consciousness of Canadians, WestJet made a bold move, hiring Studio M, a Toronto production company, to create a Christmas campaign like no other.

Going deeper

Studio M specializes in emotional advertising — an approach to brand promotion that combines original storytelling with brand enhancement. Instead of restricting itself to the 30 second television format of most commercials, Studio
M strives to tell a deeper story in about five minutes. Then they put the video on YouTube and hope that the ad will go viral — which it often does. Besides the WestJet campaign, Studio M has seen its efforts achieve wild popularity with Kraft Peanut Butter’s Storytime (1.5 million views) and Quaker Oats’s The Recital (11 million views).

**Emotional advertising: Nothing tops WestJet**

But nothing tops the success of WestJet’s social media campaign. To date, WestJet’s Christmas videos have been viewed 50 million times, leading to a doubling in traffic on WestJet’s website and a definite bump in travel bookings. More importantly, people are anticipating WestJet’s next effort when it comes to its Christmas video series. This puts a lot of pressure on Studio M to come up with the next viral ad. In 2013, the WestJet Real-time Giving film drew over 40 million views. Their 2014 and 2015 efforts drew a much lower viewership despite some inspiring storylines: in 2014, WestJet brought Christmas to a struggling town in the Dominican Republic while the 2015 video featured WestJet employees trying to provide 12 000 mini-miracles in a 24-hour period (they actually got to over 30 000 mini-miracles by the end of the campaign).

In 2014, Canadian marketing magazine STRATEGY named WestJet its Brand of the Year.

**Storymakers vs. storytellers**

Essentially what WestJet (and Studio M) has done is capitalize on a current marketing and advertising trend. Gone are the days of a captive audience sitting in front of their TVs consuming commercials while they waited for their shows to resume. Now people are zipping past commercials with their PVR remotes and streaming their content commercial free. This has put pressure on companies to find new ways to grab people’s attention outside the realm of the traditional marketing and advertising environment. One way of doing this is to become storymakers instead of storytellers.*

Some companies are starting to move away from the creation of contrived and fictitious stories involving their brand and toward storymaking that shows the brand going out of its way to interact with consumers. This approach goes straight for the heart with emotional appeals that say more about the brand’s personality than the product it is promoting.


**To Consider**

1. Why do you think emotional marketing and advertising works so well?

2. Why is WestJet considered the current Canadian superstar of emotional advertising?

3. What does Studio M do differently from traditional advertisers?

4. What is the difference between a storyteller and a storymaker?

**Follow Up**

1. Check out the following commercials on YouTube. Make note of your thoughts and feelings and be prepared to share your insights with your classmates in a group discussion. Also, record the number of views for each commercial as well as the length of each commercial (30 seconds would be a traditional television commercial; anything longer is probably made for social media). Put your discoveries in the following chart:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of commercial</th>
<th>Thoughts/feelings</th>
<th>YouTube views</th>
<th>Time/length</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernas: Chinese New Year, 2012</td>
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<td>Dove: Onslaught</td>
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<td>Duracell: Trust the Power Within (Derrick Coleman)</td>
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<td>Edeka 2015 Christmas Commercial</td>
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<td>Google: Reunion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google: Dear Sophie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google: The Year in Search</td>
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<td>Kraft Peanut Butter - Storytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share a Coke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skype: Stay Together</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Cheerios Effect: Andre, Jonathan and Raphaelle’s</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Find three additional commercials that you feel fall into the category of emotional advertising. Why do you think these commercials should be characterized as examples of emotional advertising?
WESTJET: Merry Christmas to All and to All a Good Flight

Peter Noel Murray, an expert in consumer psychology, identifies a number of factors that impact consumer behaviour when purchasing a product or considering a service:1

- A consumer’s emotional response to an ad trumps the content of an ad
- Emotional attachment to a brand creates loyalty; the actual quality of a product lags far behind when it comes to loyalty
- The “personality” of a brand helps create an emotional bond; the factual elements or components of the brand play a far less significant role in influencing consumer behaviour
- The brand’s “story” or narrative is instrumental in creating an emotional bond with consumers; stories allow for connection while factual descriptions foster disengagement and, in turn, disinterest

According to Murray:

“A nationally advertised brand has power in the marketplace because it creates an emotional connection to the consumer. A brand is nothing more than a mental representation of a product in the consumer’s mind. If the representation consists only of the product’s attributes, features, and other information, there are no emotional links to influence consumer preference and action. The richer the emotional content of a brand’s mental representation, the more likely the consumer will be a loyal user.”

Queen’s School of Business professor Tandy Thomas viewed WestJet’s 2013 Christmas film Real-time Giving and said, “What the video has done is it creates this emotional experience with the viewer, which helps create an emotional bond with WestJet, which is one of the strongest ways to help build up a strong brand.”2

Sources:

Your Task

1. Go to YouTube and watch WestJet’s Christmas videos. Just watch them as a consumer — don’t worry about taking any notes.

2. Watch the videos for a second time. This time focus on the factors that influence consumer behaviour that Murray notes in his Psychology Today article.

   Guiding questions:
   a) Does WestJet provide information about their product in the videos or is their emphasis on creating an emotional bond with consumers?
   b) What kind of emotional reactions did you have while you watched the videos?
c) What did each video do to promote the personality of WestJet? Describe WestJet’s personality as portrayed in the videos.

d) How did the producers develop a narrative in each of the videos? Were the stories engaging or boring?

3. **Summary question:** How well did WestJet do in its efforts to make emotional connections with consumers in their Christmas video series?

**Class Discussion**

As a class, discuss your reactions to the WestJet Christmas videos. Which video did you like best? Which one did you like the least? Which scenes tugged on your heart strings the most?

Here are the names of the WestJet videos you’ll need to watch:

- WestJet Christmas Flash Mob, 2012
- WestJet Christmas Miracle: Real-time Giving, 2013
- WestJet Christmas Miracle: The Spirit of Giving, 2014
- WestJet Christmas Miracle: 12,000 Mini-miracles, 2015