

The Weirdest Marketing Campaigns and Why They Worked

We're in an age where, in many cases, weirder is better in terms of marketing. If you still have cable TV (our Hulu Live like me), you're not free from the clutches of the wasteland that I've dubbed The Weird Commercial Wars. For decades, many companies have been trying to out-weird each other with zany commercials and bizarre taglines. I, for one, am here for this weirdification of our TVs and commercials shoved into YouTube videos. While there are many different types of marketing strategies, some businesses have chosen to keep things weird. Here are some of the weirdest marketing campaigns and why they worked.

Those Weird Quizno's Rodents

Oh Quizno's. Home to toasted subs and apparently, home to raspy voiced rodents who love to scream and play the guitar badly. In these early 2000s commercials, little cartoon rodents sang badly about their love for Quiznos subs, and the ads looked like they were created using MS Paint. Whoever chose to associate rodents with a sub shop, you win. This is truly a bizarre connection, but one that's stuck with me long beyond Quiznos itself, which seems to have sadly vanished.

Experts explain that Quiznos was using these ads to build an awareness campaign, one that had a big impact with the little airtime they could afford.¹ I know these ads worked on me (and a few others in the office) because we can still belt out "WE LOVE THE SUUUBSSS" when Quiznos is ever a topic, which I guess isn't that often. Sadly, the sandwich chain has faded into obscurity locally, so clearly there were other issues at hand. Maybe too many singing rodents in the pepper bar?

Old Spice Man & Friends

So men's deodorant isn't something that women usually wear, but that didn't stop Old Spice from targeting women in their famous "The Man Your Man Could Smell Like" ads from 2010. The Old Spice Man, beaches, manliness, and the line nobody could escape: I'm on a Horse. The ads got weirder (and funnier), setting the pace for weird commercials in the future.

The ads didn't stop there. The Old Spice Man took to Twitter, recording personalized messages to fans. Here's why those weird Old Spice campaigns worked: Old Spice determined that women were the ones who were more likely to buy their products, buying deodorant or body wash for their partner. So, Old Spice worked to rebrand and find a new image with a younger audience, walking a fine [men's personal care product] line between targeting women without alienating men.² Today, we still see these ads and Old Spice has become as ubiquitous as Axe body spray in a crowded middle school hallway.

Mac vs PC Commercials

As I sit here typing this on a PC, I'm dreaming about my Mac back at home. The keyboard, the screen, and the superiority that comes with owning a hipster-approved computer. But what set that up in my head? The advertising team at Apple, of course. Hip Justin Long paired against a nerdy-looking Jon Hodgman, Long as the cool Mac and Hodgman as a less-cool PC.

These ads aren't as visually weird as the Old Spice Man flying around, but they're still weird in their overall approach. There's no computer, yet that's what's being sold. The ads were successful in helping viewers see Apple's point about what makes Macs the better choice, doing so in an easy to understand

way by making computers human. These ads were named the Best Advertising Campaign of the first decade of the new century by Adweek.³

The Great IHOb-ening of 2018

While for most people, IHOP is a destination for greasy food at 2am to soak up copious amounts of alcohol, others apparently visit the breakfast mecca for burgers. In June 2018, the pancake staple went flipping nuts and changed its name to IHOb – International House of Burgers.

There was madness in the streets. People didn't know up from down. Pure MADNESS. Ok, not really. More than anything, just general confusion, or genuine belief that IHOP abandoned its pancake foundation for meatier pastures. But it was all a trick. Yes, my friends, your sweet IHOP played you so they could sell you burgers.

This faux name-change campaign brought all the right attention to IHOP's new burger offerings, to the tune of 36 billion earned media impressions and a serious growth in burger sales, which increased by 4 times.⁴ The IHOb-ening worked because it started conversations, both digitally and in real life, about the overall brand and it built serious curiosity about IHOP's burgers.

That Kid Who Got Free Wendy's Chicken Nuggets Who I'm Not Jealous About at All

It's no mystery that the Wendy's twitter account is the Internet's gift to earth. Those snarky social media marketing experts better be getting paid in all the Frosties they can carry. When a teen set out on a mission to get free chicken nuggets from Wendy's, the challenge was set: 18 million retweets. Soon, the teen's tweet broke the Guinness World Record for retweets and yes, he got a year's supply of Wendy's nuggets.⁵ No, I'm not jealous at all. It's fine, I'm fine.

While this 365-day supply of free nuggets (NOT JEALOUS AT ALL) may not have been strategized, it shows how organic today's marketing has become with social media. Brands need to be willing to work with their customers and fans, because this scenario proves that brand advocacy can happen in an instant, and it can be record-breaking.

For more tips on digital marketing, or if you'd like to buy us a lifetime supply of chicken nuggets, contact our digital marketing agency today.

Sources

1. Slate – [The Creatures from the Sandwich Shop](#)
2. AdAge – [21st Century Ad Campaigns](#)
3. Adweek – [Apple's 'Get a Mac,' the Complete Campaign](#)
4. Food Newsfeed- [Did IHOP's IHOb Campaign Drive Sales?](#)
5. NPR- [Quest for Free Chicken Nuggets Inspires Twitter's Most Retweeted Tweet](#)