

The Eternal Optimism of the Advertising Mind

Most of modern marketing is concerned with portraying the avoidance of suffering, what I call 'the eternal optimism of the advertising mind' - usually through acquisition of the product or service on offer - and is correspondingly deemed inauthentic and biased by those it targets. This problem is transmitted to each new generation of marketers, advertisers and market researchers to convince them that to succeed they must 'accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative and don't mess with mister in-between'

Can I remind you that this is a line from a song...written in 1944, when the world was locked in war and cheery messages might have been prompted by the need to relieve suffering. As I said, to understand you need to ask: 'who was talking to whom, about what and why then?'

But surely its better to be positive than negative, say the advertisers. I don't want my product associated with negativity!

Even if for customers, the product offers a way out of a bad situation, being stuck, feeling that something is missing? Remember the core maxim of NLP [Neuro Linguistic Programming]:

Match > Pace > Lead

Unpacking that, to engage someone you need to mirror them, this is the first step to empathy. To sustain that mirroring, you have to appreciate their pace, how it is for them, in their world - and match that. Once you are in sync, once there is rapport, you have a good chance of leading them or influencing them. Isn't that what the advertiser is trying to do?

Why does this persist? As Freud told us, there is always a secondary - less overt motive - underpinning any odd behaviour. I believe that the Eternal Optimism of the Advertising Mind is for the benefit of clients, locked up in an office, spending 8 hours a day pushing something quite trivial in the bigger scheme of things. This is certainly not something they dreamed of as children. When did you last here a kid say, "When I grow up I want to be a Marketing Manager?"

The endless optimism is for clients, not customers.