

HEROES, LIFESTYLES &



What makes people sit up and take notice and, even more importantly, buy?



Watch companies face the same dilemma that every other company in the world who advertises does: how to have an impact on consumers who are bombarded from so many sources with images, impressions, catch phrases and product info (some say at least 3,000 images a day). Just think about your day—if you start it with the “Today” show, you’re seeing commercials and product information in the form of news stories. Read the newspaper over breakfast? More advertising. Listen to the radio on the way to work? Jingles and tag lines along with the traffic report and Jack Johnson’s newest single. Checking your e-mail? Don’t forget the banner and pop up ads all over your screen. Read any mainstream magazine like *Vanity Fair* or *GQ* and you can’t even find the table of contents for all the ads. Then prime time TV features ads every eleven minutes or so, unless you’re watching *Lost*, one of TV’s hottest shows, which plays more ads than I ever thought possible. Think you are getting away from the bombardment by watching a feature film? Think again, because today just

about every movie has some element of product placement, be it cars, clothes, sunglasses or watches.

How can anything stand out in this steady maelstrom of information? That’s the challenge.

Trends in Watch Advertising

Product advertising—be it for cars, dish-washing liquid, beer or watches—goes in cycles. Sometimes, most watch advertising uses the “product as hero” philosophy, where the ads feature little more than a big image of the watches. Then, other times, education and backstory about the company is a big part of the advertising message. Still other times, slogans or impact images come to the forefront, along with lifestyle photos.

The bottom line is that no one really knows what will work and what won’t. Many companies stay with the product as hero ads because they are safe—you can’t make too big a mistake by leading with the product. After all, people who are buying a watch want to know what it looks like.



CELEBRITIES



“Advertising has almost come full circle,” says Ron Jackson, president, Girard-Perregaux/JeanRichard NA. “If you look back at the ’30s or ’40s, the majority of print ads G-P ran featured product but also story and emotion. In the ’80s and ’90s, we focused on product without any background images or emotional associations. For the next three to five years, you’ll again see advertising featuring more than just product—association with important moments, celebrities, emotional elements and more.”

“Every brand has certain variables—for us, it’s history and manufacturing expertise,” Jackson continues. “We have to tell our story and grab the reader’s attention in the flip of a page. If you’re not successful, you are a second away from being gone. You have to blend what you have to say with grabbing people’s attention.”

Some companies have been very successful with different marketing campaigns. Take Patek Philippe’s brilliant ads, with the tagline “You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next genera-

tion.” Started in 1996, they capture the perfect mix of image, emotion and thoughtfulness. Patek won’t be changing that ad campaign any time soon, because it has already become a classic.

Making an emotional connection with the reader is incredibly important. “We always show the product,” says Hank Edelman, president, the Hank Stern Watch Agency (Patek Philippe). “If you’ve got the right message, it’s very valuable to have more than just the product. So many of the watch ads are identical in concept—big watch, very detailed copy and contact information. In our view, that doesn’t necessarily connect with the reader. If it was the only watch ad in the magazine, it might make an impact, but when there are six or ten or fifteen, it loses its impact. We try to have a more emotional connection with the reader.”

“The concept is the same: our watch is something that will last,” Patek Philippe’s Edelman continues. “In the current campaign, we started all over again, talking to consumers, asking them what they felt was

special about their watch. The consumers came back and said that this is one of the few things I own which I will wear and enjoy and then pass on. Since that's the way the customers see us, we thought 'Why not use it in our advertising?' The message has never really changed. The intent of our company is to make the finest watch we possibly can, which implies that it is something that will last, and our advertising strikes an emotional and practical chord."

Advertising is a key element for Breil's brand strategy, a newcomer to the US market but well established in Europe. "With advertising we want to build brand awareness and to communicate to consumers the positioning and the values of the brand: bold spirit, personality, sensuality, Italian (Milanese) origin," says Roberto Sforzini, head of marketing, Breil (Binda Group SL). "The product has always played a key role in our ads. The strong and unbreakable link between the product and its owner is underlined in all our campaigns by the warning, 'Don't touch my Breil.' However, we don't focus only on the product; our campaigns aim at representing a world of values and emotions. This differentiates our advertising approach from luxury watch brands, traditionally focused 100 percent on the product. For a brand like Breil, operating in the segment of affordable, contemporary lux-

ury, in which the emotional aspects are very much relevant, we think that we need to communicate more than the product itself."

Impact and Effectiveness

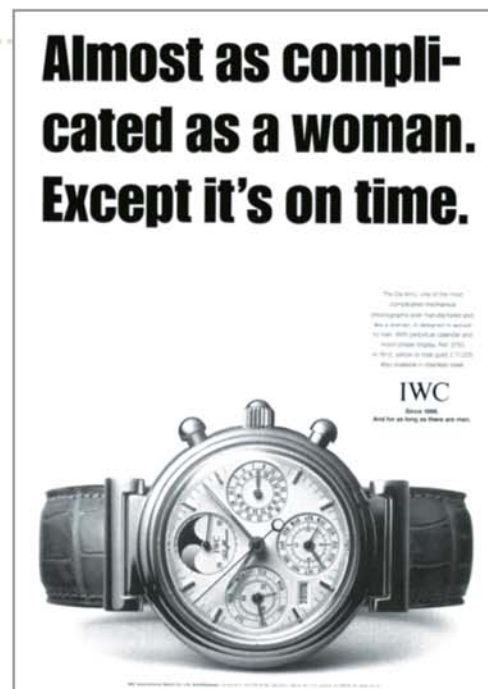
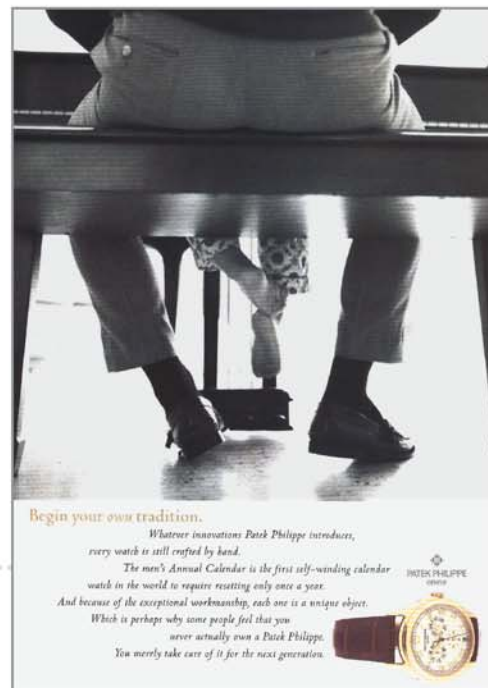
Some companies feel they need to make a splash so they can stand out from the crowd. They come up with something very creative, a unique or sexy image that will stop the reader

Ad images from Patek Philippe (top) and IWC.

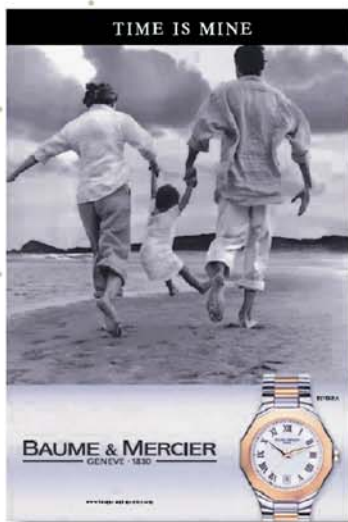
from turning the page or the viewer from changing the channel. But, the question is, does that really work?

An ad might be so creative that it generates industry buzz, wins awards, garners attention for the ad agency and the company, but if it doesn't sell product, who cares?

"There's a quote that 'in advertising, not to be different is to be suicidal,'" says Tom Sloan, VP/Creative Director, Henderson Advertising (Greenville, SC). "Yes, there's risk but



from left—Corum and Hamilton ads of the past.



there's risk in sameness. There's risk in complacency. There's risk in being a vanilla brand."

The problem is that today's consumer is jaded by so much advertising. "Looking at ads produced not too long ago really demonstrates how naive consumers really were, with ads containing claims and storylines that are quaint, silly and comical," says Herb Proske, an advertising instructor for The Art Institute of California-Orange County. "That electrostatic drumming and persistent overexposure has created the 'media mutant' — protected by incredibly thin skin, hype filters, short attention span and a hunger for eye candy and instant gratification. This consumer is extremely savvy, jaded, and painfully cynical about advertising in general. Josephine the plumber, Mr. Whipple begging us not to squeeze the Charmin, or Madge soaking her hands in dish detergent will never fly again. In the future, you're going have to sell them without them knowing they got it. Just look at the growth of contagious media. Hate to say it, but viral media is going to be nothing to sneeze at."

There are examples where watch companies advertise a certain model and that model spikes in sales, so it's possible that advertising just a watch, so the watch people can see what's special about that watch, works.

"Believe it or not, it's not hard to stand out because the 'clutter' is just that: meaningless and pointless executions," says Rob Frankel, branding expert and author. "That's because before they get to the advertising, companies and agencies forget about brand strategy. They simply don't know how to do it. The last few generations of advertising and marketing people have been mostly under-powered and under-educated, so their efforts don't work nearly as well as they should.

"Before 1975, advertising was about strategy and marketing," Frankel continues. "After 1975, two things happened to change it forever: lawyers and mega-media. First, lawyers sued everyone who made any kind of specific claim, which meant ad people created advertising that sounded like it said something, but meant nothing. That's why you have taglines like 'Is it in you?' which could be as much for a killer virus as a sports drink. Second, because so few of the brands

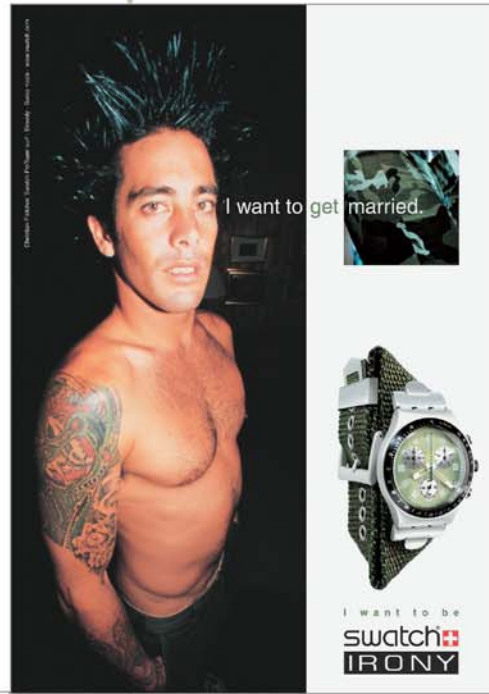
Emotionally evocative advertising from Hamilton, Audemars Piguet and Baume & Mercier.

understand marketing strategy, the business shifted from marketing-driven to media-driven. The ad agencies figured that by driving millions of dollars of ads at people, eventually those people would be pounded into submission. That's why you see so many ads that leave you scratching your

head. They just don't make sense."

Frankel advises watch companies to get their brand strategy figured out first, and then decide on the kind of advertising needed. The goal is to have the brand perceived as the only solution to their prospects' problem or desire. "You can't even start to raise awareness until your brand message is clear," Frankel says. "Since most companies have no true brand strategy, and their ad agencies don't know how to create them, 99 percent of advertising either fails or is far less productive than it should be."

Advertising at one time was simple, but it's not any more. "It used to be as easy as just talking features/benefits or product comparisons," details Henderson Advertising's Sloan. "Then you had your choice of only three television networks. Now there are hundreds of



Edgy ads from Swatch and Audemars Piguet make use of the unexpected.

television channels, thousands of magazines and millions of products. The ad industry has had to adapt by creating new touchpoints and using new technologies—Internet, product placement, guerrilla, word of mouth, mobile and so on. And now you have to entertain, not just inform.

"Simply put, advertising is the vehicle to express the brand's essence and its personality," Sloan continues. "The advertising should create a voice that stands out from the competition. It should allow someone to identify with the brand. It should engage them while making an emotional connection. And in the end, they may not know why they're married to the brand, only that they are."

A great watch ad is timeless, one that speaks to us and makes a connection. ❖

Article by watch editor Keith W. Strandberg. For brand contact information, see "At Your Service," pages 174–75.



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Working the Celebrity Angle

Watch brands are using celebrity endorsements and ambassadorships in increasing numbers, but do celebrity ad campaigns really work?

Advertising experts are divided as to whether celebrity associations work in product advertising. “There are no benefits to using a celebrity, because people remember the celebrity instead of why the product is hero,” says Rob Frankel, branding expert and author. “The worst part is when they pull a Kobe Bryant, O. J. Simpson or Anita Bryant. Celebrities are human, and often land in jail or die on you, so they are typically not good investments. I steer all my clients away from that.”

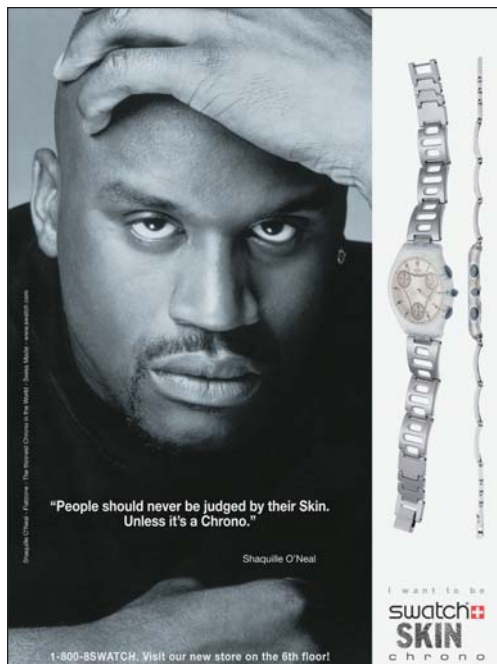
There is always a risk involved with every kind of advertising any brand decides to do, however. “There is both an up side and downside to the use of celebrities,” says Allan Steinmetz, CEO, Inward Strategic Consulting Inc. “Recently, many

companies endorsed several American Winter Olympic hopefuls and invested huge dollars promoting them. Unfortunately most performed poorly and were not even contenders during the games. Also, celebrities can make a big marketplace mistake and reputations can negatively impact the product. If the celebrity is a long-term winner and has audience support you’ll be OK.”

Sometimes, campaigns using celebrities come up roses, like Maurice Lacroix’s campaign with tennis champion Roger Federer. The company signed the tennis player right before he began his incredible streak of wins and he remains ranked number one in the world. The tie-in with Federer has been a bonus for Maurice Lacroix.

LONGINES

Elegance is an attitude

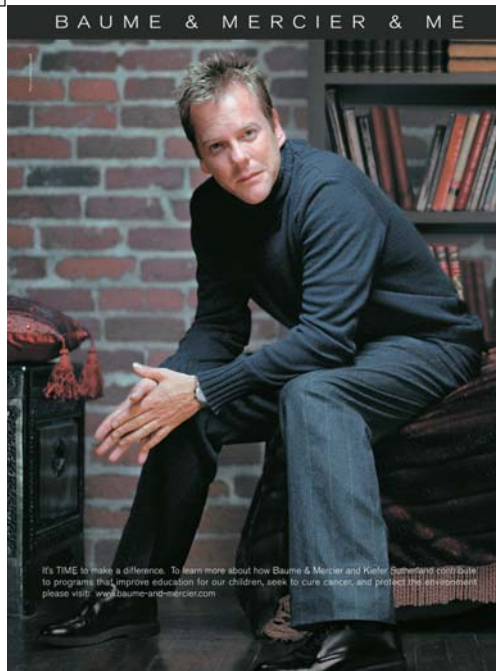


president, Baume & Mercier NA. “Meg and Kiefer are Baume & Mercier—they are classy people, with true likeability, credibility, trustworthiness and immediate recognition. The ads also have a philanthropic aspect—every dime went to the charity of their choice. In both cases, the ads have been very popular. Every retailer I have met with tells me the ads are really working, having an immediate impact on our sales. This is the first time Baume & Mercier has worked with global ambassadors and we wanted to make

It could have easily gone the other way, though. Most brands work with a celebrity to get that instant connection with the consumer. So, like Federer, the celebrity should be successful, likeable and accessible.

“Celebrity can get you instant credibility,” acknowledges Tom Sloan, VP and creative director with Henderson Advertising. “The use of a celebrity can create an aspirational quality or mindset and it can attach you to an attitude or a personality or even other products. You do run the public relations risk should that celebrity do something detrimental and fall from public grace. You also run the risk of that celebrity’s fifteen minutes being up. If that happens, from an advertising standpoint you can come across as ‘been there done that’ if you aren’t fresh with your approach.”

Baume & Mercier introduced its new campaign featuring Meg Ryan and Kiefer Sutherland in September 2005 and the company is very pleased with the response. “The new campaign has provided us with incredible visibility,” notes Rudy Chavez,



sure we went with people who were good fits with our company. There has been nothing other than excitement.”

If a celebrity doesn’t have an impact, some brands are quick to pull the trigger and go with another. Then there are celebrities who wear just about any watch they are given, appearing in press shots that the brands distribute to the media. Some brands have told me about celebrities who contact them about watches, expecting to receive pieces free of charge. To be fair, the chance to get a watch onto



a celebrity’s wrist is seductive, because he or she might be photographed wearing the watch or be interviewed with it on. In this country, celebrities are seen as being at the forefront of culture, so if they are wearing a watch, it automatically becomes desirable and sought after.

The jury is out on whether celebrity ambassadors are the right choice in advertising. To a great extent, it depends on the brand and on the celebrity. Some brands have been hugely successful, some brands have tried and decided not to continue, and still others have stayed away from celebrities altogether. ❖

—Keith W. Strandberg

