



## MADvertising

### *A Humorous, But Not So Funny Look at Advertising (Will you see yourself in here?)*

By Drew Zagorski  
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I recently walked into my living room and sat down on the couch (no - you're not being tweeted here!). Laying on the end table was a copy of MAD Magazine, which caught my attention. I grew up reading MAD, and have to admit I'm not totally displeased that my daughters have latched on to it. What grabbed me on this issue's cover was the headline: 50 Worst Things About Advertising. Well, since I'm in that game, I had to look... right?

As I read through the list, I have to admit it made me laugh. But it was also kind of sad, because I saw in it, many of the things I see every day, just on a smaller scale. I didn't think every item on the list was relevant - just some staff writer's attempt at humor - so I've winnowed it down a bit. Here are the items from the list I wanted to share with you. As you read through it, ask yourself, is this my advertising too? If your answer is anything but a definite NO, maybe it's time to connect with some professional help.

Also, as you read this, be aware it's from MAD Magazine, so not everything in the list will be exactly politically correct. I've cleaned up where I could.

1. The genius ad agency that decided, given Apple's extremely limited market share of the home computer industry, that the best way to win over PC-users was to make them look like out of touch retards.
2. Direct mail junk which refers to you as a "valued customer" when you only ordered from the sender once in the last ten years.
3. Businesses that brilliantly advertise on bus stop benches, where, at any given time, their phone number (or web address) will be blocked by someone's rear end.
4. (Image of a car flying through a ring of fire with the disclaimer: Professional drivers on a controlled course. Do not try these moves yourself.) There's a great marketing angle: show potential buyers the coolest things they can do with your product, then tell them they shouldn't ever do it.
5. Huge oil companies that take out expensive TV spots to tell you how much they care about the environment, instead of putting some of that money toward actually helping to clean up the pollution they cause.
6. The Oscar Meyer Wienermobile. Guys, we all have unresolved 'issues' stemming from our childhood, but can you at least try to play it down a little?
7. Gillette going on and on about the fact that they've added another blade to their already scary looking razors. If they add one more, we'll need a three day waiting period to buy one.
8. Liquor companies who urge you to "Drink Responsibly" while selling you the very item that make you lose all sense of responsibility.
9. Food products that trumpet their "improved taste." Or, in other words, they've been making you eat the old, bad tasting garbage for years.
10. Sports announcers who are forced to shill for products during a game, by means of cute segues. (Followed by a cartoon of an announcer watching an injured player be carried off and saying, "Looks like Slobkowski took a crushing hit to the spine and might be paralyzed. Fans, if you're paralyzed by crushing debt, call the good folks...")
11. Companies that brag about being "family owned," which can also be said about the mafia.
12. Catalogs that come every few weeks informing you that it's your last one... unless you order from it.
13. Weasily cop-out phrases like "Prices may vary," "Your mileage may differ" and "Only at participating stores." Why don't they just come right out and say, "The claims we just made aren't true"?
14. IHOP's slogan "Come hungry, leave happy." Funny, but we don't recall any prominent philosopher or theologian defining happiness as "a stomach full of starch, grease and sugar."
15. TV ads where the husband is a clueless, whining man-child whose wife has to tell him what product will solve his absurdly minor problem.
16. Unfunny MasterCard parody ad on a t-shirt - \$12; Unfunny MasterCard parody ad on YouTube - 1:16 of your life; Eventual end in sight to unfunny MasterCard parody ads - Priceless.



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17. The makers of Doritos using hard-bodied young people with flawless skin in their ads. We've seen people who eat a lot of Doritos, and, for some reason, they don't look anything like that.
18. The surprising number of words that rhyme with "gellin'." Will someone please take away Dr. Scholl's rhyming dictionary?
19. Those frighteningly erratic fan-blown tube air dancers that are impossible to navigate around on a busy sidewalk without getting whipped in the face by a stinging swath of colorful rip-stop nylon.
20. Memorial Day sales. Because how better to honor Americans who gave their lives for freedom than to flock to stores and buy stuff made in Asian sweat-shops?
21. Erectile pill commercials that hint at sex through embarrassing metaphors. (Followed by a cartoon of a guy throwing a football through a tire swing.)
22. The pandemic of copycat advertising by businesses that think they're being clever by borrowing an idea the rest of us got sick of eight years ago. (Followed by a cartoon of a row of businesses with the following signs: got beer?, got sauerbraten?, got orthopedic shoes?, etc., etc.)
23. Home-made, poorly Xeroxed flyers taped to poles, ATMs and other public places by would-be multi-level marketers - which no one, anywhere, has responded to... ever.
24. What's worse than poorly produced commercials featuring local business owners on cable television? Even more poorly produced testimonial commercials featuring the same local business owners attesting to the power of advertising on cable television.
25. That familiar blue envelope from Valpak, chock-full of valuable offers for dry cleaner services you don't use, carpet cleaners you don't trust, ethnic restaurants you wouldn't eat at, and self adhesive address labels you don't need... that goes directly from your mailbox to the garbage pail, unopened.
26. Diet product shills who sell their own product by constantly repeating that fad diets don't work... except - amazingly - their own.
27. Bowflex ads featuring buff men and women with amazing bodies who anyone with half a brain knows didn't get in that shape from monkeying around with a flexible graphite rod three times a week for 20 lousy minutes.
28. The cynical exploitation of imperiled motorists in those loathsome OnStar radio spots.
29. The irritating trend for a company founder or bigwig discussing the merits of their product by looking at some indistinct point off to the side as though he somehow doesn't realize he's being taped and we're supposed to think he's participating in some impromptu interview. Look into the camera already! (Followed by a cartoon of the Men's Warehouse guy.)

And the one that wasn't in the magazine, but needs to be on this list: Personal injury and structured settlement lawyers... Can anyone say: It's my money and I want it now!!!

Well, those are the best of MAD's list of the top 50. If you want to see the whole list, it was in the October 2007 issue. Hopefully, none of the items above made you say to yourself, "Ouch... I'm doing that too..."

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