

TELEVISION

Audi, Jaguar knock Mercedes in recent ads

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By JOE MCCARTHY

Have soaring luxury automotive sales given brands the green light to take shots at one another?

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Mockery has always been a tactic used to insinuate direct comparisons between brands, and several automakers have recently deployed coated insults to redirect consumer attention in a period of unprecedented bounty. While the surface aim of mockery is to make consumers laugh, a prized response for marketers, the more subtle purpose is to dislodge brand loyalists by giving them more choices to consider.

"If mockery ads have an audience other than the executives of the brand and its ad agency, the audience is most likely to be younger consumers who might appreciate the humor, competitiveness, and satirical nature of the ads," said Ron Kurtz, president of the [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta.

"These ads are risky as are all negative ads other than perhaps political ads, which seem to do best when they are negative," he said. "Mockery or negative ads can diminish the stature of the advertiser and potentially give some enhancement to the stature of the target.

"This can be avoided only if the ads are very well done in a humorous and satirical

fashion."

Comparing feathers

"Comparative" ads generally involve some banter or light mockery to avoid brand hectoring, and flat-out insults that can do more damage to the attacking brand than the attacked brand. For these reasons, crafting a compelling mockery ad is challenging.

Despite the possible backlash, brands still chum out ads that jab one another. Humorous ads generally circulate with more speed on social media, reach more prospective consumers and last in the collective imagination as usable conversation pieces for longer.

The record-breaking sales numbers of 2013 have emboldened a few brands to deride one another, sensing that they can steal loosely affiliated customers from one another. Not surprisingly, one of the leading luxury auto brand of 2013, Mercedes-Benz, has also been the leading target in recent comparative ads.

Back in December Jaguar USA took aim at Mercedes-Benz's recent Magic Body Control television spot with a jocular commercial that pits a chicken against a jaguar.

The original Mercedes commercial shows a few chickens dancing in the air under the direction of human hands, which is supposed to be an analogy for the brand's new body control feature.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/nLwML2PagbY](http://www.youtube.com/embed/nLwML2PagbY)

Magic body control TV spot

Without context Jaguar's commercial seems like a bizarre challenge to Mercedes-Benz, but, for viewers privy to Mercedes-Benz' original, the parody gains humorous clarity.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/3PQS8SFWNQw](http://www.youtube.com/embed/3PQS8SFWNQw)

Jaguar vs. Chicken

Jaguar's spot successfully leveraged the commotion surrounding the original spot, and managed to garner more than 2 million views.

Another side

Audi USA's latest "Luxury Car Abstinence" ads may have gone too far in its efforts to knock competitors. The automaker's spots feature young professionals describing the integrity needed to avoid easy car choices such as BMW and Mercedes-Benz and the gratification that accompanies holding out for an Audi.

In the commercial, characters are shown avoiding eye contact with other car models, running toward their "inferior" cars in shame and even quitting their jobs because of company car choices.

As [Business Insider](#) put it, it would seem that an ad based on the idea of abstinence would be the absolute wrong way to target young professionals in 2014, but that's exactly what Audi has done in a new ad bashing competitors BMW and Mercedes-Benz.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/O10Hxx0NTQE](https://www.youtube.com/embed/O10Hxx0NTQE)

Luxury Car Abstinence

Indeed, the audience response to the new ads has been largely negative, with Audi's Youtube channel studded with angry comments.

Unlike Jaguar that limited itself to a narrow spoof on an already well-known commercial, Audi stretched its comedy to contain the larger issue of identity, and ended up aligning itself with harmful societal beliefs about gender.

Final take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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