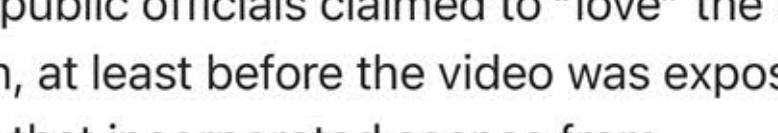


Love campaign crash and burn

By J. Manuel González (The Philippine Star) - July 8, 2023 - 12:00am



Many public officials claimed to “love” the Love slogan, at least before the video was exposed as a fake that incorporated scenes from Switzerland, Thailand, Indonesia, Brazil, and the UAE. Like a competent air-crash investigator, we should take the trouble to understand what went wrong here.

A good slogan incorporates as many of these elements as possible:

- Has a specific target audience in mind (sometimes the choice of target is obvious, but more often it is not; and the audience cannot be “Everyone” because that’s just spitting in the wind)

Nike’s Just Do It doesn’t really distinguish the product but compensates by incorporating a powerful close-the-sale command. Supposedly to encourage you to exercise, its secret mission is to tell procrastinating buyers to Just Buy It Now. Putting that in electoral terms, Nike’s slogan woos, not the voters who already made up their minds, but those who’re Undecided. 3 out of 4.

BMW’s The Ultimate Driving Machine hits all four elements. BMW knows that \$100K car sale cannot be closed by a mere slogan. So BMW uses its slogan for “image-reinforcement.” 4/4.

Lay’s Potato Chips’ Bet You Can’t Have Just One is an after-purchase dare that virtually commands the target audience (compulsive eaters; to guesstimate, these represent 5 percent of the buyers but 50 percent of the sales — good choice of target audience) to keep eating (so they will go out and buy more, very soon). While less direct than BMW, it also hits all four elements. 4/4.

De Beers’ Diamonds Are Forever has been running nearly a century. It is obviously talking to women, and associates diamonds with their hope for “love that lasts forever.” Product distinction and emotional reward are present here, plus short and memorable. Again, 4/4.

Tourism slogans need the same elements.

Incredible India combines alliteration (repetition of sounds) with a 7-note tune. Incredible evokes “pleasurable amazement.” The result is a very memorable slogan that also suggests India’s cultural uniqueness. But definition of the target market is weak. 3 out of 4 elements.

Visit Thailand Year 2023: Amazing New Chapters is hopelessly long and utterly un-catchy, but identifies a clear target audience and contains a clear message: “Even if you’ve already been here, there are more reasons to come back and be amazed.” Past customers are a willing and attentive audience, and Thailand has a lot of past customers. 3/4.

Malaysia, Truly Asia has been around since 1999, and still delivers. It is simple and memorable because of the alliteration. More sophisticated than appears at first glance, the slogan invites a certain audience – those who haven’t been to Asia yet – to believe that a visit to Malaysia is as good as seeing Asia. Lacks an emotional reward, so 3/4.

Cameroon’s slogan, All of Africa in One Country is a parallel with Malaysia’s. Now we come to Love the Philippines, the Department of Tourism’s Crashed-and-Burned Campaign. The slogan is short, but lame and meaningless.

“Love” is, without any doubt, the most over-used and trite word in every language. We love our parents, partners, children, Oreos, sunsets, God, Disneyland. Love means so much, it means NOTHING. Consider how persuasive you would find Love Nike or Love Lay’s.

New York got away with “Love” because it combined the first person “I” with a bright red heart graphic. New York got away with it so well, in fact, that everyone else making a similar claim now just sounds Copycat. Like our DOT.

The DOT paid P49 million to the geniuses who thought this up and it lacks ALL four elements of a competent slogan. Unlike BMW, the slogan doesn’t distinguish what it is selling. Unlike Malaysia, it isn’t memorable. And unlike Thailand, it doesn’t know whom it is talking to, so it can’t offer an appropriate emotional reward.

Love the Philippines might be a command like Nike’s, but as we all know, you can’t command Love, so it sounds wimpy and desperate. As a promise (“You will love the Philippines”), it’s pretty lame, especially once you see what the video claims you will love.

Ah yes, the video. As everyone on earth now knows, the video includes stock footage from Switzerland, Thailand, Indonesia, Brazil and the UAE. That’s to tell you how unique the Philippines is. Which kind of tells you how competent the people at DOT are.

The DOT erased it already, but you can find snips and screenshots by Googling Philippines dot love video. The video is admittedly an improvement over the 2013 It’s More Fun and the 2022 Mummies and Skeletons videos, because at least it shows tourists. Some scenes are kind of appropriate, like the whale shark, except that there are better countries for seeing marine megafauna. No tourist is going to choose the Philippines based on the prospect of whale sharks. Don’t fight on a battlefield where the other side occupies the higher ground. For example, if you are the fifth richest man wooing a lady, it is a mistake to boast of your wealth.

This video suffers from the same fundamental, mortal, original sin as all past videos of the DOT: It is totally focused on what baduy bureaucrats want to sell, and not at all on what the customers might want to buy.

This DOT Love video is self-centeredly focused on what the DOT (and various congressmen) wants to sell – things that very few real-life tourists have any interest in: wind turbines, Chocolate Hills, perfect cones, half-naked Igorots, screaming children in tattoo costumes... This is the equivalent of wooing a woman with stories about your pet python’s babies. You think you’re fascinating. Everyone else thinks you’re clueless.

The worst part of this is that no high official in Philippine government has EVER admitted error or condescended to listen to criticism. We can predict what will happen next. They will change the “borrowed” scenery and claim the problem has been fixed. Or they will hire yet another clueless ad agency, this time paying P100 million, to get yet another STUPID campaign concept that will also CRASH AND BURN.

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