

I'm Only Here for the Beer

There are many reasons why I prefer living and working in Canada to Britain, but beer advertising isn't one of them. The current state of this great nation's beer advertising fills me with an almost bottomless despair, especially since I was brought up to believe that beer advertising's rightful place was to be at the leading edge of an ad industry's creative capabilities. Beer advertising is difficult, which is why it should be consistently good – because there are no easy options: it all comes down to great insight coupled with great creativity, and brought to life in great executions funded by the apparently limitless budgets.

We have had our high spots in my 9 years of residence here, but Rant and Street Hockey turned out to be one-offs rather than great campaigns, the Bud Light Institute has been dropped, much to the chagrin of the creative community (I assume because Coors Light was leaving it for dead with the growing female market – clients aren't stupid.) The much trumpeted Zig work for Molson seems to have been something of a debacle, judging by its absence during the hottest month of the century and its subsequent re-appearance in heavily emasculated form, leaving Sleemans as the only brand making a decent effort to differentiate itself. Our lead brands seem to be stuck in a cleavage from which, Austin Powers-like, they cannot or will not extricate themselves. Take a look at the spoof ad for

Tits&Ass beer at <http://www.allowe.com/Humor/video.htm#BeerAds>



and you will quickly realize that they are talking about us. So am I having a rare bout of nostalgia in remembering British beer advertising as being consistently good? Well, it's certainly consistently different in look and feel from what we have here.

It's difficult to evaluate advertising without knowing the brief of course, but we can at least categorize them by the basic storylines where 1 = none at all and 4 = lots

	Canadian	Blue	Blue Light	Sleemans
Tits&Ass	3	3	4	1
Buddies	3	4	2	1
Product/Packaging Differentiation	1	1	2	3
Heritage	1	1	1	3
Nationalism	1	1	1	2

If I look at the current big beer brands in Britain on a similar basis, the chart looks somewhat different:

	Boddingtons	Carlsberg	Stella	Budweiser
Tits&Ass	1	1	1	1
Buddies	1	2	1	1
Product/Packaging Differentiation	4	3	4	4
Heritage	4	4	4	2
Nationalism	1	3	3	1

No reliance on dateless wonders and pneumatic young totty; but a huge focus on a differentiation message, done in a style (usually humour) that appeals to the target.

Why such a difference? After all, I can vouch for the fact that British males aged 18-24 appreciate the female form as much as do their Canadian counterparts. I believe it is due to differences in how research is used in the two countries.

Focus groups seem to be taken much more literally here. Young men saying they like to look at voluptuous young females isn't an insight about a brand or even the category, it's just a fact of life. So leave them to get on with downloading porn onto their mobile phones and stick to the task of trying to uncover a meaningful insight about your brand in that category, and then coming up with a great idea to bring it to life.



Another part of the difference is that British advertising is showing a trend towards demonstrating product authenticity as a way of creating consumer trust, given a world where people know when they are being bullshitted and face a bewildering degree of choice.

I also checked around some other countries to see how typical was Britain, and the answer was very. The only market I found still doing it the Tits&Ass way was Australia; but given their almost Neanderthal attitudes to both beer and “Sheilas”, that shouldn’t give us much comfort. And they at least manage to integrate the tits into the creative idea.