



# EMOTIONAL DISTRUCTION

by Steven Wagner



*“If you want to know where the best creative talent is don’t go to Hollywood, don’t go to novels, don’t go to... that’s not where it is. The best creative talent is on Madison Avenue, because they are involved in something really difficult, ‘How do you communicate in an environment where people don’t want to be communicated to, where everyone is trying to get your attention?’ That requires creativity. That requires cutting edge creativity.”*

*- Sut Jhally*

71 days from now our next elected President will reside over America and he can thank his gut for choosing not to spend a dollar on advertising. “Why should I pay for what I am getting for free,” (1) Trump camp stated when questioned back in August. 30 years after his antitrust lawsuit was brought against the NFL, Trump comes out the victor as NFL viewership is hitting an all time low. The NFL with their ‘Sunday Packages’ and ‘NFL Network’ are creating inclusive networks for premium paying fans, when in reality TV viewership has fallen amongst the ages of 65 and younger since 2011 anyhow. (2) So why advertise on TV networks? Why waste your time? Between TIVO and live streaming on the internet, cutting the cord has allowed the consumer to cut back TV consumption and regain control of their wallets again. People are less inclined to spend money on wants and more on needs.

What does this all mean? It means advertising has to be creative, but subtle and influential enough to be impactful. Television media has become saturated with ads. Sports are no longer about the event but

who is wearing what AT the event and where they can purchase. It's like opening a Fitness Digest, Consumer Electronics or the likes to see more than half the magazine dedicated strictly to endorsements on why to purchase creatine vs. protein, a 1080p TV vs. a 4k TV, a MacBook vs. a Surface. But we read the articles anyway. We watch the sport anyway. We slowly consume this media while being blasted by a multi billion dollar industry selling us crappy beer, high saturated fat chips and penis pills. Sut Jhally states, *"Indeed so overwhelming has the commercial colonization of our culture become that it has created its own problems for marketers who now worry about how to ensure that their individual message stands out from the "clutter" and the "noise" of this busy environment. In that sense the main competition for marketers is not simply other brands in their product type, but all the other advertisers who are competing for the attention of an increasingly cynical audience which is doing all it can to avoid ads."*

(3) When you watch your next baseball game on TV take a look at the scrolling marquee behind the umpire. It won't be advertising anything about the team. Or when you go to see the next James Bond is it a



Martini “shaken, not stirred”, or Stolichnaya, Skye, or Grey Goose? Advertisers sneak these subtle hints into our subconscious in hopes we remember them later. But can you differentiate them anymore? Do all the large American beer ads look the same? How about Chevrolet and Ford commercials. Can you tell the difference between the two?

In order to stand out from other advertisements they have to hit on emotion. They need to compel to the viewer in a way that the product is desirable, whether that be a need or a want. Sut Jhally talks about advertising colonizing media forms and creativity that build long lasting impressions for years to come. “A \_\_\_\_\_ *is forever*” was developed in 1948 by DeBeers and now bachelors all over the world are breaking the bank to buy a materialistic possession as a way to swoon their mate. You know you need to buy it because the statement tells you she wants it, and



the only way to express love is to buy the ultimate commitment, a ring. Madison Avenue built a diamond empire that tries to replace the emotion of love with possession. You can now “own” love. You can gift it in order to feel it. This propaganda tactic built this belief that diamonds are a scarce commodity, when in reality this is not true. Through creativity we now associate engagement with a large rock because “A Diamond is forever.” This narcissistic ploy has planted an emotional ‘want’ in the consumers mind and has now, in turn, created an almost necessity that in order to become engaged you need to purchase a diamond ring. What does this say about consumers? That we are easily swayed by propaganda advertising tactics?

*“The question that we need to pose at this stage (that is almost never asked) is, ‘Is it true?’ Does happiness come from material things? Do we get happier as a society as we get richer, as our standard of living increases, as we have more access to the immense collection of objects? Obviously these are complex issues, but the general answer to these questions is ‘no.’” (3)*





The over saturation or colonization of advertising has caused all our mainstream media advertising to think outside the box. GoPro for instance will give top video bloggers beta products to do a short video teaser for their audience to view. Recently Casey Neistat, one of the most

viewed Youtube stars, was provided a DJI Mavic Pro and a GoPro Karma to test out on his daily vlog. He starts each vlog stating “this is not a paid endorsement”, but the reality is gifting a \$1000+ piece of equipment is the same as a paid advertisement. Both DJI and GoPro knew they were selling something that consumers wanted. They knew they could build a relationship with a top internet celebrity. Since media can essentially be had for free, what were the end results? Both the Mavic Pro and the Karma are on back order for months! Go Pro and





# COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS





DJI essentially ate the cost of 1 drone (\$1000~) to advertise to 1 million viewers subscribed to a free blog.

In turn Casey Neistat, the Youtube sensation, gets to double-end the deal. Not only does he receive a \$1000~ drone from both GoPro and DJI, but he can then monetize his Youtube account by allowing Amazon to inject advertising for purchasing the drones from their shop. Casey makes money off of viewership through page clicks on Youtube on his channel as well as every time someone makes a purchase through an Amazon ad click on his video posts. And you wonder why TV ratings are lower for the under 65 group? It's simple. The idea of instant gratification of having something in your possession without having to leave your desk or sofa. You can't 'CLICK' a TV ad and go straight to checkout. But you CAN click an ad on a website and find it ready to go in your cart, and sometimes at a bargain price compared to what was originally advertised on TV.

The tactic here is very subtle but obvious when you take a step back

that advertisers are building off of the consumers emotion. If we look back at the DeBeers diamond campaign we are led to believe that a diamond will seal the deal with a hand in marriage. The same can be said for these Youtube channels with cult followings. Fanboys are going to want to buy the Karma or the Mavic Pro because they saw Casey Neistat using it. They see how good his video editing is and they believe they can achieve the same visually striking material by purchasing the same equipment that Youtube and advertisers just implanted in their heads. The desire to brand yourself is being manipulated by advertisers through emotional infatuation with products. These fanboys don't 'need' a new drone, they 'want' it. And because the best way to advertise these days is to be viral, GoPro leveraged Casey Neistat to reach a larger audience in his followers.

What's really intriguing to me is how we got to this point with Youtube advertising. The product sits in this weird grey zone of playing vs. advertising. The star of the show is interacting with his audience as he 'plays' with the drone, all the while he has declared that the show



is not a sponsorship. The product, which is not yet available to the consumer is put on a pedestal for about 15 minutes in a mock review as we all bare witness to how awesome it is. It reminds me of a scene from **Idiocracy** when David Herman informs Luke Wilson of his role at the White House:

*“I’m Secretary of State, brought to you by Carl’s Jr.”* It’s the same in these Youtube vlogs. Don’t just say ‘Drone’, say ‘DJI Mavic drone’. So long as the vlogger tells a compelling story the product will sell itself.



The commonality of these advertisements is the emotion it creates to its viewers through stories and how they can appeal to everyday life. Typical nine to five jobs, classically parodied in shows such as

**Parks and Rec, The Office** or movies like **Office Space** showcase the mundane lifestyle the characters live in. Playing off this humor, Reebok released the **Terry Tate: Office Linebacker** series during the 2003 Super Bowl which became one of the most successful halftime commercials ever (4). With Fantasy Football and other online sporting avenues becoming increasingly popular since the 90s, the injection of manliness depicted by the character 'Terry Tate' into the 'office water cooler' environment has obviously snowballed into main stream media.



According to an article in the New York Post in 2015 (5) *“The company’s latest Spending & Saving Tracker said 74.7 million Americans plan to participate in fantasy football this year, spending \$4.6 billion, company spokeswoman*



*Jane Di Leo said.*” Last year (before the large insider trading scandal) Draft Kings and FanDuel spent nearly \$206 million on advertising, which targeted consumers with hyperbolic headlines, shock factor with numbers built on stories written to show the ordinary man as a millionaire in the making, and pop ups showing weekly earnings. Channels like the NFL Redzone thrives in a world where now we as consumers can make money off of owning a little bit of a ‘fantasy’ player. Hell, fantasy football has even grown so far that FX built a TV series around the topic, in **The League**. Conversations amongst friends have degraded from “the Steelers really kicked ass this weekend,” to “I may love the Steelers, but they need to give up 27 points to Brandon Marshall this weekend.” Their’s no more allegiance to individual teams anymore, but rather ownership of individual players. This has caused hate mail and thrats sent from fantasy owners to athletes in the past for poor weekly performance.

This evolution of advertising is a complete about face from yesteryear. Brands would paint pretty pictures of models and celebrities living

the luxurious life, sipping their cosmos up above the rest of the world. The only way to achieve such materialistic enlightenment was to buy into their product (yeah, I am looking at your DeBeers!). But this has changed dramatically through the art of storytelling. By relating to the audience they are creating community and friendship through love and compassion. “It’s okay Roger. I too had trouble talking to a doctor about my receding hairline.” Brands build an identity with the consumer so they do not feel alone — it’s comforting. They play into your ego by showing you that just because your bald doesn’t mean you can’t live a full life, maintain a healthy sex drive, and possibly grow all your hair back so long as you don’t have a heart condition, high blood pressure, or extremely long toenails... (can you feel the anxiety built here? Yes we hold the cure, but it might kill you!) But then they got you, buying into this propaganda that in order to live this excellent lifestyle, you **MUST** ask your doctor for Minoxidil or Finasteride and that without it you will not be able to live a normal life. You become a subscriber for the rest of your life, and that’s exactly what brands want these days.



*“Advertising doesn’t cause addictions. But it does create a climate of denial and it contributes mightily to a belief in the quick fix, instant gratification, the dreamworld, and escape from all pain and boredom. All of this is part of what addicts believe and what we hope for when we reach for our particular substance... Addiction begins with the hope that something “out there” can instantly fill up the emptiness inside. Advertising is all about this false hope.” - Jean Kilbourne*

Brands don’t want you to believe in the moment, they want to win you over with the lifestyle of being part of their ‘cult’. Apple just released the new MacBook Pro with their Qwerty touch pad. Now you don’t need the touchpad, it’s a nice gimmick, but where Apple really catches you off guard is what they didn’t advertise. Apple did away with their USB drives opting instead for Thunderbolt 3 which requires most consumers to purchase additional Apple only adaptors. Companies like Adobe,



Mac, Microsoft, Netflix, Amazon thrive off subscription business and create a sort of culture to keep the customer coming back for more by offering add-ons. Amazon for instance will advertise their Prime subscription. You pay \$99 a year to get free 2-day shipping and they will include their Prime movies & music to you. When you pay for Adobe CC they give you free cloud storage. Netflix started with DVD-by-mail, now it's a free add-on with your instant video subscription. They hook you with their product and buy a customer for life. But the second you opt out you lose everything. I can live without Adobe Cloud storage, but I cannot live without Photoshop, Lightroom and InDesign. However, if I can't just select one or the other, I have to have it all. Youtube recently released Youtube Red, which allows for ad free streaming. Why? Because free Youtube sells ad space before the audience watches a video. This is not a new tactic by any stretch of the means but because they now offer a premium subscription to their otherwise free service you now have an option to watch ad free videos. Hulu has been pioneering this same tactic for years and it has proven to be profitable.

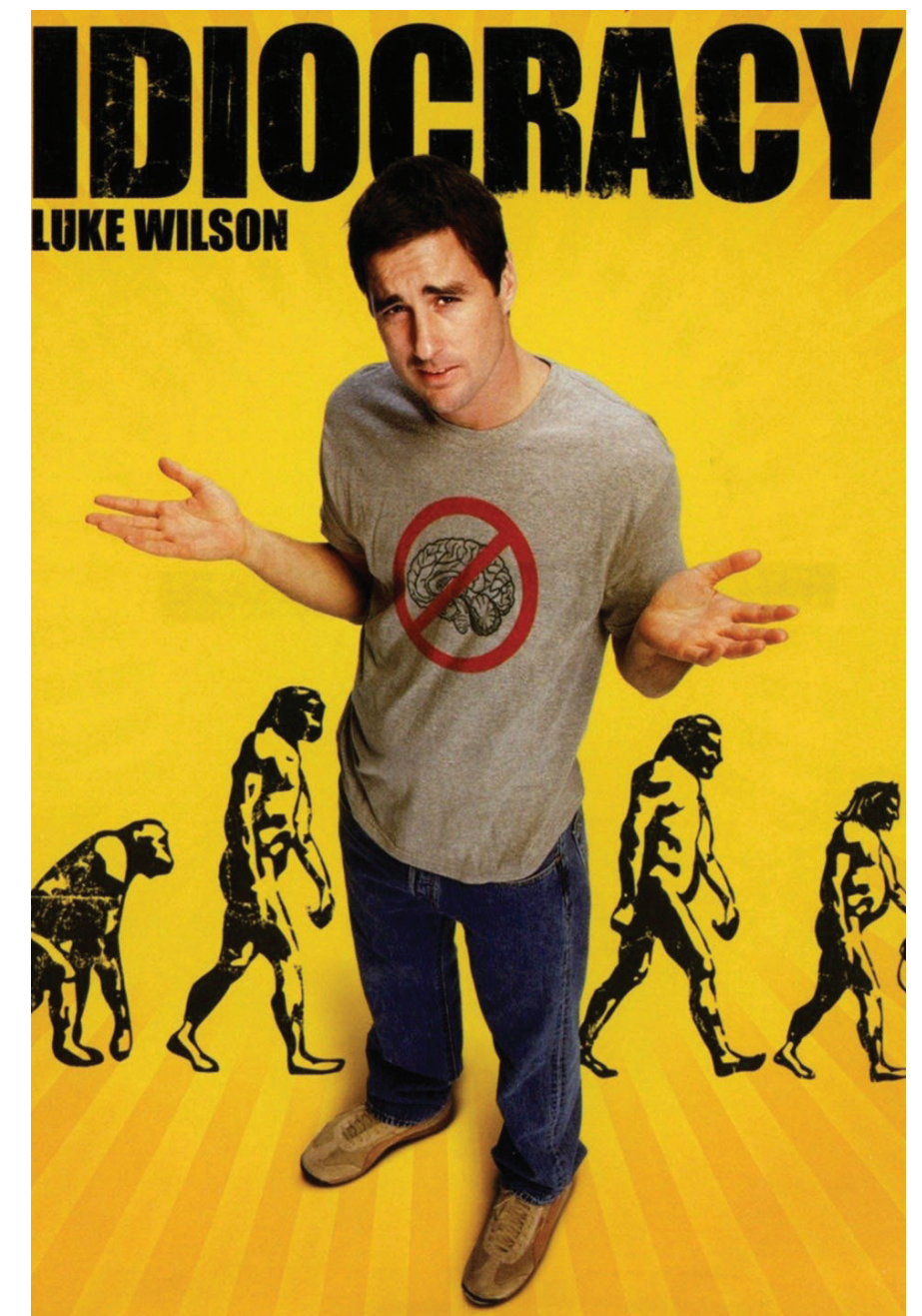


*“Indeed this is precisely how advertising talks to us. It addresses us not as members of society talking about collective issues, but as individuals. It talks about our individual needs and desires. It does not talk about those things we have to negotiate collectively, such as poverty, healthcare, housing and the homeless, the environment, etc.. The market appeals to the worst in us (greed, selfishness) and discourages what is the best about us (compassion, caring, and generosity).” (3) Because we are consumers we don’t have time to wait. Stories need to be told quicker and the products need to be available to us sooner because this is what will elicit the strongest emotion of all: happiness. “Every society has to tell a story about happiness, about how individuals can satisfy themselves and feel both subjectively and objectively good. The cultural system of advertising gives a very specific answer to that question for our society. The way to happiness and satisfaction is through the consumption of objects through the marketplace. Commodities will make us happy.” (3)*

Advertising has infiltrated everywhere we turn telling us we are too fat, we don't drive the best car, we travel to lousy destinations, our smart phones aren't smart enough, our water isn't fresh enough. The competition this has created spins us in circles and pits us against one another to decide the best from the worst. One day Milk is good for your bones, the next it causes cancer. It tells us how we can be better and in turn it brings out the worst in us. We turn a blind eye to the Thai sweatshops when we put on our Nikes, or boot up our MacBooks. The concerns raised by Sut Jhally in both "Advertising & The Perfect Storm" as well as in "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse" should inflict concern as to how advertising affects our individual being. Humans are slowly moving towards a lifestyle where personal interaction is slowly falling to the wayside and creating seclusion from the rest of society. Advertising is teaching us acronyms such as "lol" and "ttyl", slowly dumbing down the English language and leading us down the path of stupidity. MTV and E! entertainment hype shows about teen pregnancy and infidelity. We are slowly moving towards a world in which 'Idiocracy' might be reality one day. We acknowledge "the drought" yet we have



no remedy for it, because our grass needs to be green no matter what. Global warming is ignored. Poor working conditions are ignored. Ultimately it falls on the individual to look within themselves to make better decisions that benefit more than just themselves but society as a whole. Do you want to be manipulated by mainstream media? We can already tell with the NFL, NBA and MLB, a game that is only supposed to play out for 60 minutes is now a 4 hour event. TV commercials provide the filler and in game side bars for celebrities to endorse what they are wearing, or The Donald to obtain more free “advertising”. We now live in a culture where it is less about being an individual and more about being sucker punched into following the greatest trends. Sadly the future that Mike Judge created in Idiocracy is not far from the present...



## SOURCES

- (1) Read more: <http://dailycaller.com/2016/08/16/why-hasnt-trump-run-television-ads/#ixzz4PYHNRAoW>
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- (4) <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/world/terry-tates-a-big-hit--on-palin/2008/10/20/1224351106023.html>
- (5) <http://nypost.com/2015/09/05/nearly-75m-people-will-play-fantasy-football-this-year/>



