

Dos Equis Beer
“The Most Interesting Man in the World”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92nDNojlofs&feature=related>

The world of advertising, like the world we live in, is plagued by redundancy. When one concept proves its ability to bring revenue to a company, it often comes to be viewed as a standard way of doing things, and is rehashed endlessly. But this, of course, causes the ideas to lose their effectiveness, as what was once novel becomes commonplace. This creates an opportunity for anyone who can envision something fresh and new, because being different means being memorable. A case in point is Dove’s “Real Beauty” campaign: after years of looking at models like Kate Moss and Claudia Schiffer—whose impossibly good looks they could never hope to match—many women identified with the more plain-looking models employed by Dove. Although Dos Equis is moving in rather the opposite direction, as will be explained shortly, it is not unlike the Dove campaign. By positioning itself as a polar opposite to the tired, stale concepts that beer companies have used for years, Dos Equis seeks to set itself a world apart from other brews, creating an image for itself that plays to men’s wildest fantasies.

Though there are many commercials in “The Most Interesting Man in the World” campaign, most follow the same general format: a narrator recites clever one-liners that establish the title character’s reputation while video clips of his fantastic deeds are displayed. At the end, it shows him in a restaurant at a table with incredibly beautiful women. He says, “I don’t always drink beer. But when I do, I prefer Dos Equis.” A shot of the beer bottle follows, and it closes with the man

advising us to “stay thirsty, my friends.” Indeed, it is a great format for an ad campaign, as they can continue making new ones for as long as they can think of more one-liners. For brevity’s sake, we shall analyze just one particularly good ad in the series.

As the audio and visual elements of the commercial are unrelated until the final scene, it would be sensible to analyze them separately, beginning with the audio. Music plays throughout the commercial—an instrumental flamenco-type piece. The music is soft, so as to not distract from other elements, but at that same time it is far from boring; one could easily imagine it being played at a dance club somewhere in Spain or Latin America. Its versatility of purpose allows the audience to imagine whatever scenario is most interesting to them, be it bullfighting, relaxing in an exotic club, or dancing with a seductive Spanish woman—all of which would be better with a bottle of Dos Equis.

The narrator’s voice is low, strong, and male, and frequently uses pauses to accentuate the message. His contribution to the ad consists of exactly four statements. The first is “His reputation is expanding faster than the universe.” This bit of hyperbole lets us know right from the beginning that this guy is a big deal, commanding our attention. It also subtly shows a bit of class: a lesser beer might have said something like “his reputation is expanding faster than (some celebrity’s) waistline,” or some other bit of tasteless humor, but not Dos Equis: it is above such easy, lowbrow tricks. The second says, “He once had an awkward moment—just to see how it feels.” This shows his gifts in the realm of sociability, as an exceptionally smooth individual. The third line is, “He lives vicariously—through himself.” This is

pretty funny, in my opinion, serving to make the ad memorable. It also says something about the audience this ad is directed towards: “vicarious” is what Mark Twain might call a “five-dollar word,” and is one that is probably only known by more educated or well-read people. Thus, Dos Equis is positioning itself in the upper end of the market, demographically. Intellectual viewers used to beer commercials that employ a vocabulary understandable to a five-year-old may feel more like this ad is aimed at them. The final statement is simply, “He is: the most interesting man in the world.” Its placement at the end is purposeful: if the ad proclaimed this at the beginning, viewers would be skeptical—and skepticism is just about the worst feeling an advertisement can evoke, as sellers want consumers to *believe* in the product. Indeed, after these statements, and the magnificent exploits on video that will be described shortly, you can genuinely believe that he *is* the most interesting man in the world—exceptional construction of ethos, don’t you think?

As there are four one-liners before the bar scene, there are also four video clips. They are all made to look as though they are from old celluloid film stock, evoking the warm feeling of old films, and include scratches and specks of dust to enhance the effect. This gives the impression of many years of experience, and the general atmosphere of the clips are reminiscent of 1960’s films such as *Lawrence of Arabia* or the Connery-era *Bond* movies, adding to the man’s epic aura. The first clip shows him as a young man playing a sport, which, after some research, I discovered, is called jai alai, popular in Basque Spain. Besides its exotic nature, I also found that the Basque government advertises it as “the fastest sport in the world,” due to balls that have been recorded traveling at up to 188 miles per hour. It is not a

coincidence, methinks, that the most interesting man in the world would play the fastest sport in the world. The second scene shows our protagonist in a tuxedo, accompanied by a motley crew of companions that includes butlers, a woman in a formal dress, and a man in a fez all gathered around the mouth of a cave, carrying lanterns to see in the night. This builds intrigue, showing that our hero is an adventurous one. Next is the man engaging in martial arts fighting with men in black robes—one would certainly be interested to hear how he found himself in such a situation. And finally, some shots of the man piloting a speedboat full of beauty pageant contestants—he is, of course, a ladies’ man. As all of these are pretty interesting, they, too, build up his credibility as the world’s most interesting man.

In the final scene he is an aged man, but still has great virility, enjoying the rewards that years of adventure hath brought him: the company of some gorgeous women, and a Dos Equis beer. His endorsement (“I don’t always drink beer. But when I do, I prefer Dos Equis”) is at first puzzling, seeming a bit lukewarm. But when compared to other beer ads, this line makes astonishingly good sense.

The standard beer commercials generally feature either middle-aged men that resemble the dumb dads on unfunny sitcoms, usually shown sitting around watching football, or young, un-suave guys partying with friends or trying to get with a girl. They are lowbrow, and strive to evoke a “bromance” quality, as beer is a social drink. They attempt to portray people that the “Average Joe” can identify with. Dos Equis’ approach, though, is the complete opposite: it creates an ideal figure, someone the average man could only dream of being. Men, of course, know they could never be that awesome, but there is a bit of promise at the end: the ad’s

subject says “stay thirsty, *my friends*” (italics added.) This gives the hint that, if you are refined enough to drink Dos Equis, you might be worthy of running in the same social circles as this interesting man! This would certainly be desirable for many, and suggesting that you can simply be friends with someone like him is less ham-handed than the common advertising trick that you can *be* the person in the ad.

His previously mentioned style of endorsement makes sense in this context. To me, it represents the antithesis of images like the one in the recent Super Bowl ad featuring a house made of Bud Light. Once the novelty value of having a house made of Bud Light wears off, it would actually be quite boring, drinking nothing but that lower-quality beer all the time. Indeed, the most interesting man in the world is far too interesting to engage in this sort of behavior. Rather than being a tacky spokesperson shamelessly shilling someone else’s product, he is a refined connoisseur *recommending* a good beer to people with tastes as sophisticated as his.

Through this method of differentiating itself, Dos Equis portrays itself as a more elegant beer, appealing to consumers who don’t want to be anything like the idiots in other brewing companies’ commercials. Overall, I think it does this very effectively: after watching it so many times in the course of writing this essay, there is nothing I would rather do than kick back with a cold bottle of Dos Equis—after I turn 21, of course!