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Breaking Social Stereotypes: There's a Car for That

“Be yourself; everyone else is taken,” said Oscar Wilde. But how can we be ourselves when society makes it so difficult with social conformities? This pressure begins as early as elementary school when all kids care about is who brought the best snacks during lunch time or who had the best toys at show-and-tell. For a young boy this can be very intimidating at school. As we grow older these social conformities don’t disappear, they just affect us less because we are older and wiser. Or do they affect us more because we think, since we are older, we can outwit these social conformities? For instance, a man might land a job in corporate America that requires him to always wear a suit and tie and drive a BMW or a Mercedes-Benz to work. But, the social standards, regardless of age, make it difficult for us to stand out from the crowd and be ourselves. Companies, such as Audi and Infiniti, take note of these norms and whom it appeals to. For example, in an Audi commercial it shows a young boy who sees a society where the cars people drive, the houses people live in, the clothes worn to exercise are all identical to each other. Similarly, in an Infiniti commercial it shows a young adult trapped by the standards of corporate America. Both commercials target adult males, however, Audi’s commercial is more towards a married man with kids while Infiniti’s is toward a single, working man. Both commercials appeal to the audience’s emotional desire and struggle to break free and be

themselves through the use of visual images that the audience can relate to and also supported by “famous quotes” or a spokesperson.

In the Audi commercial, a young boy is sitting in the back seat of the car looking out the window while his mother is driving him to school. On his way, his mother drives through a neighborhood. The boy notices something in particular—everything is the same—the houses people live in, the outfits people wear to exercise, the dogs people walk and the cars people drive to work were all exactly the same. Then he passes by a supermarket and notices that all the vehicles that the people are taking their groceries to are identical. When the boy finally arrives at school, he exits the car and begins walking up the stairs. But, just before he enters, he stops, looks back at the car he arrived in and smiles. He realizes that his mom’s car is different than all the ones he saw—it was an Audi. Immediately a quote from Oscar Wilde appears in the commercial saying, “Be yourself; everyone else is taken.” Then the Audi drives off into the distance and the commercial closes with a text saying “The distinct new Audi Q5.”

Audi’s use of a child in its commercial is crucial in its appeal to men’s desire to break free, particularly those who are married with kids. Fathers understand that school brings a lot of pressure on their sons, especially when it comes to being accepted by your peers. A father wants his son to come home and tell him that he had a wonderful day at school. This is concerning to a father because maybe he wasn’t very well liked at school and didn’t have many friends, but now that he is grown up with kids he wants to be proud of his kids. That father wants his child to come home and say, “Dad I had a great day.” Audi knew that the use of the child would bring about the inner child in a father and make him think back to when he was in school and was nervous about what his peers might think of him. Audi uses a quote from Oscar Wilde saying, “Be yourself; everyone else is taken.” Whether the father knows this quote or not he has most

likely heard of the author. The quote reminds the father to tell his son to break free from the social conformities of school and be himself because his son is distinct just like the Audi in the commercial.

In the Infiniti commercial, picture a “factory of life”, with men on one assembly line and women on the other. The men are being dressed with the exact same suit and tie outfit. The women are being dressed in the exact same business attire outfit—a long skirt, blouse, jacket and high heels. An announcement is made in the factory, “Simulation is beauty; compliance is security.” One of the men in the line sees himself in the mirror and was disappointed because he is dressed like all the other men. At the end of the line is the vehicle distribution from which only two cars can be selected—BMW or Mercedes Benz. Before he reaches the end of the line, a woman appears on a monitor next to the assembly line and says, “It is in your pocket.” The man reaches into his pocket and takes out a key to an Infiniti vehicle. Immediately he jumps off the line and runs to find the car. After escaping security, which were robots, and jumping over crates and running past the two vehicles that he had to choose, the man finally reaches the Infiniti car. He gets in and drives out of the factory. Upon leaving the factory a male spokesperson for the commercial says, “Luxury never felt so liberating.”

Infiniti’s use of the “factory of life” helps appeal to men’s desire and struggle to break free from standards, especially single, working men in corporate America. Infiniti shows that the factory represents corporate America. Men have to dress a certain way, follow certain commands and even drive certain luxury vehicles to conform to the company’s cultural values. However men are disappointed with these standards from the commercial that is why they could relate to how the man felt in the commercial. Men do not need to abide by these standards to feel that luxury you get from working with a company. Once the man has escaped the factory a voice

says, “Luxury has never felt so liberating.” The voice’s message is exactly what the audience wants to do with the norms their job is placing on them—break free and be distinct.

Whether you are a single, working man or a married man with kids society still makes it challenging to break free and be yourself amongst others. Audi and Infiniti’s commercials appeal to men’s emotional struggle and desire to break free and be different through different visual images and quotes or messages. Audi does so by showing the world through a child’s perspective, which brings out the inner child in the viewer; Infiniti does so by showing a man trapped in a factory of life to represent a man dealing with the standards of corporate America. Overall both commercials bring to realization that social conformities are going to be with you no matter what age you are and that society expects you more if you abide to their norms as oppose to being yourself. However the commercials say that you should “liberate yourself from these standards and be yourself because you are “distinct”.