

Guerilla gardening

What do you get when you cross Alan Titchmarsh with Banksy? Guerilla gardeners. These green-fingered daredevils are transforming Britain's neglected concrete jungles into bloomin' beautiful green spaces.



Absinthe

So big stateside that Prince of Darkness Marilyn Manson has launched his own version, Mansinthe. Ah, the sweet, sweet taste of goth rock in a bottle. How did we live without this?

Friendship bracelets

These sweat-magnets are tipped for a comeback this summer, along with Global HyperColour t-shirts. Sweat = style, people.



"HELLO? YEAH, I'M ON THE PLANE."

It's the beginning of the end as Emirates becomes the first airline to allow in-flight mobile phone usage. It certainly makes us feel Trigger Happy.

Halifax Howard

The poor man's Howard Marks is the latest victim of the credit crunch as Halifax announces the timely demise of its 'staff as stars' campaign.



Sharon Stone

Right up there with Glenn Hoddle after being stupid enough to suggest that the Sichuan earthquake was 'karma' for the Chinese interventions in Tibet.



The cucumber as we know it

As Sainsbury's launches a new skinless variant of the once humble cucumber, The Measure wonders just how time-poor you'd have to be to buy naked cucumbers. Just plain wrong.



Greengrocers

Disappearing from our high streets at a rate of 50% in the last 11 years. Maybe it's because they only sell cucumbers with the skin on?

Neil Watson, Planner/Buyer, reviews the latest creative offering from Honda...



Another day, another bigger and better TV ad.

Increasing competition from digital media has been threatening a death blow to TV advertising as we know it for some time now. But rather than die the slow, painful death that some media pundits have predicted, TV has finally risen to the challenge and churned out some of the best ads in years (as Gorilla costume retailers and Phil Collins's bank account will no doubt attest). And not before time.

Honda is the latest brand to breathe new life into the medium (quite literally) by taking over an entire ad break in the middle of Channel4's Come Dine With Me to run a live ad. The ad featured skydivers spelling out the word 'Honda' as they soared through the Spanish sky. It was seen by over 2.2 million people and has generated a massive amount of buzz, although reactions have been mixed. Some have dismissed the campaign as one big publicity stunt (although surely that was the point?), with others preferring the polished production values of previous Honda campaigns. One Guardian blogger even admitted to setting his video recorder – for an ad! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Tivo.

Mixed reactions aside, no one can deny that the raw, live approach gave the ad an edge. At one point, it looked seriously like they might not pull it off but, if anything, this 'will they/won't they?' moment had us silently rooting for them and forming an instant connection with the brand. Such was the pull of the visual stunt that the ad experienced a further 8% increase in viewers over the length of the spot itself.

This is the level of interaction all advertisers are striving for and along with the massive scope for viral marketing, it presents a great kick-start to a campaign. What is even more encouraging is that this kind of enterprise is not solely the preserve of big-budget brands. The ad, including airtime, is estimated to have cost in the region of £500k, a mere drop in the ocean compared to, say, Sony's Bravia paintballs ad.

It seems that the pundits underestimated the adaptability of traditional TV. Digital has not killed the video star. For now.

Elaine Patterson, Account Manager, considers the impact of the 'freeconomic' phenomenon...



Is there really such a thing as a free lunch? That is the question being addressed by a growing number of economists as they ponder the commercial viability of inverted business models where companies essentially give their products away for free!

Of course, 'freeconomics' is old news in the fast-moving world of media, where free content has been available for quite some time now. Although the Internet is the most obvious example of the proliferation of free content – Gmail, Yahoo, Flickr, mySpace and YouTube instantly spring to mind – the old guard have been at it as well. Think Metro and Freeview.

What's changing is that the rest of the world is catching up. 'Freeconomics' is moving mainstream and being taken seriously beyond the media sector. Michael O'Leary, CEO of Ryanair, has long accepted the theory as an inevitability, telling the Financial Times a few years ago: "in a decade or so, airlines will pay travellers to distribute people around Europe".

One has to question whether giving products away for free is just a very of-the-moment, knee-jerk reaction to the credit crunch? Will it really stand up to scrutiny in an increasingly challenging global economic climate? And as more and more goods and services become available for free, what will happen to those companies who lag behind?

There is no doubt that the internet has a lot to answer for, having effectively revolutionised economics. It has created a generation who, quite simply, expect free stuff. They got Prince's last CD free with the Mail on Sunday and paid next to nothing for Radiohead's latest album. This can indubitably be successfully harnessed - Apple saw the possibility of making money by providing storage for thousands of tracks, and are now considering giving customers free access to iTunes music library if they pay slightly more for their iPods and iPhones. This enlightened approach turns the traditional capitalist business model on its head - arguing that rather than giving 1% of a product away as samples to sell 99%, there is a viable case for making profit by giving away 99% to sell 1%. If the numbers are big enough, 1% of a big number can still equal serious profit.

So for the moment, the biggest opportunity seems to be finding those markets where companies can be the 'first' to give away what others are charging for. In marketing and advertising this creates a plethora of new platforms through which to reach key audiences and to gain credibility with a new generation who genuinely do expect something for nothing.

Five ways to spend your time or money this month:

- **Eco bedding.** It all sounds a bit 'Princess and the Pea', but your scratcher is the latest product to get the green treatment – in the form of bedding made from recycled plastic bottles. Available from www.ecobedding.co.uk. From £22 for a pillowcase.

- **The Nuddle** (*nap + cuddle = nuddle*). An ultra-plush blanket that has holes for your arms so you can reach the remote control! Ok, so it's not exactly the most seasonal of products, but it's genius nonetheless. You'll thank us come October. Available from www.nuddleblanket.com for \$110.

- **Green Barbie.** No, not Martian Barbie. She's not *actually* green. Barbie 'Bcause' is dressed exclusively in the leftover fabric scraps from other Barbie doll outfits. Available exclusively at Toys 'R' Us stores nationwide.

- **Heelarious.** Don't let your baby's undeveloped taste in fashion footwear show you up. This site offers a range of high heel crib shoes for babies. Yes, really. That's high heels. For babies. Available in hot pink, black patent and zebra and leopard print satin from www.heelarious.com

- **Visa Swap.** Hotfoot it down to the pop-up shop in Convent Garden from mid-July and swap your unwanted threads for other, cooler people's like Agyness Deyn. You will be awarded points based on the value of your items which you can then 'spend' on new items. Everyone's a winner!

