

Brand Engagement Gone Wrong

Take a walk down the street and count the number of advertisements you see. With so many brands and companies competing for your attention, advertisers have to work harder than ever. One popular method of engaging **consumers** is by holding competitions where consumers come up with their own commercials or **slogans**. These have proven to be successful, and do increase the number of people who come into contact with the brand. But allowing strangers to be active in a brand's identity can lead to great problems. Here are two cases of advertising gone wrong.



Not a Model Spokesperson

When fashion brand American Apparel introduced its new range of plus-sized¹ clothing, the company held a contest to find new models. In the contest, women could **submit** photos of themselves that showed off how nice the company's clothes look on larger women. But when the company advertised that it was looking for "the next BIG thing," some women were offended because they thought the company was being disrespectful to women.

An American actress called Nancy Upton decided to enter the contest to show the world how **insensitive** she thought American Apparel was.

Nancy took photos of herself in poses that **made fun of** the contest. She wore American Apparel clothes and copied the style of their ads, but also ate fattening food, like burgers, in the photos. The photos became an Internet hit and she won the popular vote. While American Apparel did not recognize Nancy as the winner, her photos started a big discussion about how bigger women were treated in fashion, and Nancy became a hero to many.

Crashing the Commercial

Car manufacturer Chevrolet thought they had a good idea: organize a contest where people could create their own commercials for Chevrolet's newest and biggest vehicle, the Tahoe. The company **supplied** video and sound clips, and people could use computers to mix them and add their own text. The contest accomplished its goal of promoting the Tahoe, as more than 30,000 videos were made.



While many entries focused on the best features of the truck, a few were less **flattering**; they pointed out that the Tahoe was bad for the environment and that owning a big vehicle can sometimes lead to unsafe driving. Unfortunately, the negative videos spread fast, and Chevy got as much bad **publicity** as it did good publicity.

¹ Clothing for women in sizes larger than extra-large is said to be **plus-size**.