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The Commercialization of Divorce?

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The Ford Motor Corporation has decided that divorce just might sell cars and trucks. This bizarre conclusion is the only explanation for a new television “Bold Moves” advertising series the company has undertaken.



As The New York Times explained [article by subscription only]:

The Ford commercial shows two parents, two children and a dog spending a weekend shopping, driving and hanging out at the beach — but at the end of the day, the father is dropped off at his apartment. “Thanks for inviting me this weekend,” he says while hugging his children. “Sure,” responds his apparent ex-wife, perched behind the wheel of the Ford Freestyle. The commercial ends with the father waving as the car drives away.

The explanation: “Divorce is so common that I don’t think people view it as sad and depressing anymore,” said Allen P. Adamson, managing director at the New York office of Landor Associates, a corporate identity consulting company owned by the WPP Group. “It’s on every movie, every TV show. There aren’t any more ‘Leave It to Beaver’ families around.”

And: “It’s a true reflection of the world today,” said John Felice, the general marketing manager for Ford, adding that the company was not “making any type of social statement.”

At Slate.com, advertising columnist Seth Stevenson offers this analysis:

This is perhaps the weirdest commercial I’ve covered in this column. It is a freakish mash-up, blending a classically boring car ad with a bizarre stab at social commentary. I can’t for the life of me see what Ford hopes to achieve here.

Stevenson found the ad downright creepy, with the former wife inviting her former husband along for a family trip. In an truly strange flourish, Ford’s John Felice described the ad as a “celebration of family” and tribute to “the versatility of life itself, as well as the versatility of the Freestyle [the vehicle pictured in the ad].”

When divorce becomes the story line for automobile commercials, we are in big, big trouble.

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