

T-Mobile's AT&T-mocking ads likely to retire

March 21 2011, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- In its TV ads, T-Mobile USA portrays the cellular network of its soon-to-be parent company as a droll, middle-aged bald man in a gray suit. It's highly likely that this droll bald man will retire now that AT&T Inc. has agreed to buy T-Mobile USA for \$39 billion.

In fact, if the deal clears regulatory hurdles and closes a year from now, as planned, T-Mobile is going to go away as well, folding into AT&T's brand.

Robert Passikoff, founder of Brand Keys, a New York-based brand loyalty research group, said T-Mobile will likely find a neutral territory until the deal closes. By then most people will have likely forgotten the [ads](#).

"You tell me, three years ago, what campaign Burger King was running against McDonald's?" he asked.

The T-Mobile ads, which are on TV as well as YouTube, usually have three characters. There's the bald guy, who personifies AT&T's network; a svelte young woman in pink, who is T-Mobile's myTouch 4G phone; and an otherwise capable-looking young man, who's Apple's iPhone 4. The young man is constantly being slowed down and otherwise impeded by the balding suit.

It's reminiscent of Apple Inc.'s "I'm a Mac, I'm a PC" ads. In these, PCs are portrayed by a decidedly uncool, slightly pudgy man in business

casual who's constantly being outperformed by the younger Mac guy when it comes to touting the qualities of the computers they represent.

In one T-Mobile ad, the AT&T guy is shown piggybacking on poor iPhone 4 guy, who does not look too comfortable.

"That'll slow you down," quips the woman. She isn't giving anyone a piggyback ride and cheerily touts the benefits of T-Mobile with the slogan "America's Largest 4G Network."

T-Mobile launched the ad campaign on Nov. 2. Cellular data networks known as "4G," or fourth-generation, are faster than the previous, third generation ones. Wireless carriers have been touting 4G benefits to customers.

The T-Mobile ads have been visible, but it's not clear if they've had any effect. The company, which is currently the fourth-largest wireless carrier in the U.S., lost 318,000 subscribers on contract-based plans in the fourth quarter. The other three carriers, including Sprint Nextel Corp., all added customers in the same period.

[T-Mobile](#) USA did not immediately return messages for comment about the fate of the ads Monday.

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