

Companies Want to Teach Your Children Values

About ten years ago Dove released a short film with the slogan [“talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does”](#). It warned of the detrimental effects of unrealistic body image expectations communicated to young girls through advertisements.

Reading [this article](#) in The Atlantic, I couldn't help but agree that in recent times advertisers have even more confidently stepped into areas of family's lives where brands once never dared to tread. “What are we to make of ads that engage in the kind of discourse once reserved for pulpits and art and books and op-ed pages?” the author asks.

Once upon a time brands were carefully void of values and absolutely apolitical, yet now “marketers act as arbiters—of goodness, of rightness, of us-ness,” Megan Garber writes.

She points to a number of recent ads that are not only “profoundly political” but “explicitly moral,” telling consumers not only what they should buy but “about what people should be.”

Garber's take on what is happening in marketing at the moment is as insightful as it is enlightening:

“... You could read Apple and Amazon and Airbnb and their ilk as being engaged, just as their predecessors were, in a kind of purposeful collusion. You could place them on the through line that gave American TV audiences of the 1960s footage of hand-clasping hippies singing upon a hilltop, their thirsts [quenched by Coca-Cola](#), and, later, that gave viewers of the 1980s spots that invoked Orwellian philosophy to [sell personal computers](#), and, later, that found [“Benetton ads”](#)”

...serving as shorthand for a world desperate to see itself reflected in its commercial media. You could group them, too, with the recent Campbell's [ads](#) starring a toddler and two doting fathers (hashtag: #realreallife), and Kohl's ads [using an interracial, same-sex couple](#) as their models, and Mattel ads [featuring a boy playing with a Barbie doll](#), and Oreo, master of social media, making waves (and gaining fans, even those who don't enjoy chocolate or "creme") with its "[pride cookie](#)." You could see them all as progressive messages that share a convenient conviction: that the right side of history can often double as the more lucrative side of history."

So while marketers are busy politicising and moralising and companies are much more concerned with being on the "right side of history," it is important to consider the effects this onslaught of values messaging is having on children.

Just like those behind the Dove ad of almost a decade ago, today's marketers are not guided by standards that respect the boundaries of a G-rating, nor do they care for the particular values about character development, conscience formation or the meaning of life and human dignity that parents may be striving to impart.

So if you don't talk to your children and help them to decode and defuse the messaging companies are now selling alongside their products, the advertisers most definitely will.

I know one mother who refuses to watch ads for things she says her family neither want nor need. This mum has been turning off the ads for years and will tell you that it has saved her from many an awkward conversation that parents and children shouldn't be forced to have, simply because the marketing department of some company decided to put it out there.

For everything there is definitely a season and a time, and parents should defend the right to educate their children according to the values that they hold dear. Parents are the

only marketing department with their child's best interest at heart.

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