

Is social media killing advertising?

 By [Andrew MacKenzie](#)

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Over the last five years, there has been a lot of industry talk about the quality and standard of creativity delivered by brands and their creative partners.



Image credit: Elena Koycheva on Unsplash.

Yes, there have been the one or two standout pieces – generally aligned to a hot political story or a cultural nuance – but we have seen a dip in the level of advertising. So what can we attribute it to?

The question – is social media killing advertising? – is very valid, and before all the social media gurus get on their high horses, hear me out.



The don'ts of social media marketing

Jessica Barrella 18 Sep 2019



Earlier this year, two different campaigns – from entirely different categories – were brutally criticised on social media.

Gillette's call for the best men can be

The first was the Gillette 'We believe: the best men can be' campaign. A campaign that challenged men to be better men.

It encouraged us to stop being chauvinists, to stop bullying, to forget the macho facades, it challenged gender inequality in the workplace and asked us to hold each other to a higher standard, to be kinder, gentler, more humane.



Gillette's 'We Believe' campaign - is it the best a brand can do?

Rachel Thompson 1 Feb 2019



The backlash on social media was enormous, with men calling for a boycott of the brand. The YouTube video of the advert has had 29.5 million views to date, with more than 420,000 comments. The number of likes stands at 777,000 with double the number of dislikes (1.4 million).



Gillette's 'We Believe' ad receives mixed feedback

15 Jan 2019



On Twitter, the debate got even more heated with Piers Morgan – who is never far from controversy – declaring that he would no longer buy Gillette products and calling on society to let "boys be boys".

“ I've used [@Gillette](#) razors my entire adult life but this absurd virtue-signalling PC guff may drive me away to a company less eager to fuel the current pathetic global assault on masculinity. Let boys be damn boys. Let men be damn men. <https://t.co/Hm66OD5IA4>— Piers Morgan (@piersmorgan) [January 14, 2019](#) ”

In truth, the message was 'be a better man'. Treat all people with respect and humility, be kind and care, even if it's just a little. I found the advert powerful, an emotional challenge to be a better man and a better role model for my son.

Woolworths's heteronormative Valentine's Day

The second campaign was a bit closer to home, Woolworths's Valentine's Day campaign using old-fashioned references to male and female 'idiosyncrasies'.

“ i know i spoke highly of woolworths like 3 minutes ago but whose ignorant as fuck idea was it to use 'love always wins' in their exceedingly heteronormative Valentine's day campaign? Why would you even....? Literally every song on earth is a love song? And u went with love wins?— Chelsea (@LoveChelsea16) [February 4, 2019](#) ”

The popular retailer has not been far from controversy over the last few years – with product plagiarism claims – but I believe its Valentine's Day campaign was unfairly crucified on social media. It was criticised to such an extent that it had to pull the campaign to avoid further fallout.



Woolworths pulls "gender stereotyping" Valentine's Day campaign

5 Feb 2019



The problem is that brands have become too scared to push the boundaries. Creative partners are finding it increasingly

difficult to sell ideas that challenge consumers, campaigns that make a stand, campaigns that are different, courageous, even brave.

Great campaigns that challenge stereotypes, conformity, that are brave, that push us into a slightly uncomfortable place. Ads that are memorable, that stand out.



How to be brave, brands

Lynette Botha 13 Sep 2019



Will we see campaigns that achieve this moving forward? Perhaps a better question to ask in the interest of optimism is: will we see brands and marketing managers being brave enough to take a stand for ideas and creativity that will leave a positive legacy?

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