

## EDITORIAL

# Advertising and the Way Forward

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In this editorial for WPCC's special issue on 'Advertising for the Human Good' editor Carl Jones outlines a few milestones demonstrating advertising's potential via mass media for motivating progressive behaviours in the public. Matching corporate social responsibility ideals and reflecting the social concerns of millennial consumers and audiences is becoming increasingly important for brands and even governments.

Whilst existing publications in academic and professional literature raise concerns over the links between capitalist consumerism and advertising, articles in this issue highlight different examples of practice or approach that have the potential to motivate progressive behaviours in various cultures. These include ambient advertising, neuroscience, brands' cause donations, decolonisation and social modelling on the one hand, and anti-racism, recycling, sustainable tourism and choice of advertising talent, on the other.

This editorial observes how the evolved practice of advertising can work within different ideologies, with the objective of generating advertising for the human good but also how change may need to come from within advertising and society generally as attitudes change over time.

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This special issue 'Advertising for the Human Good' brings together media and communications scholars with practitioners, and analyses how advertising has the potential for motivating progressive behaviours in the public via mass media. This topic has a venerable history. Before their negative health effects were known, Edward Bernays' 1929 promotion of womens' aspirations through a campaign to smoke, successfully branded cigarettes as feminist 'Torches of Freedom', (Bernays, 2004). Over ninety years later in 2020 Nike's anti-racist social media content in support of #BlackLivesMatter by contrast asked consumers to 'don't do it'. (Jones 2020). Brands have long been inspiring changes in human behaviours to resonate with consumers. This phenomenon is not limited to brands whose concerns are those of neoliberal commodity capitalism. In 2011 the Colombian Ministry of Defense used 'ambient marketing' to convince the so-called terrorist organisation FARC to lay down their weapons and come home for Christmas (Ministry of Defense, 2011).

Brands have also been using advertising practices and techniques to create change, with the objective to generate sales and profits. Recently having a social conscience is becoming increasingly important – especially with a millennial audience who care more than ever whether a brand's values align with their own. In nation states run by non-liberal ideologies including communism, advertising is used by governments to educate publics, such as previously, China's one baby per family policy. This policy has recently changed, and the government is now re-educating over 1 billion people, to increase the falling birth rate.

In the academic world there are a few publications devoted to advertising such as the US based *Journal of Advertising* (JA), that concentrates on publishing research by academic scholars and professionals and aims to be the 'preeminent journal devoted to cultivating advertising theory' (Rodgers, 2020). JA's research is published five times a year, or presented at the yearly American Academy of Advertising's (AAA) conference. Meanwhile the practice of advertising has various efforts that focus on the business and creative side of paid communication such as the UK based Credos (Advertising Association, 2020) which is the 'think tank' part of the Advertising Association. This important UK industry body publishes papers on the state of British advertising, targeting policy makers in the UK government along with advertising practitioners. Their latest report analysed how the public views the industry, finding that 42 per cent of UK adults believe advertising can make the world a better place. (Credos, 2020). The creative part of the industry (in which I participated as a Creative and Art Director for over 25 years) is represented by the yearly Cannes Lions Festival, which is known by practitioners as the 'Olympics of advertising.' Due to Covid-19 the Festival didn't give out awards this year, and instead delivered a free online speaker series that included some topical presentations such as Alex Bennett-Grant speaking about 'racist casting calls' (Bennett-Grant, 2020).

One could argue that these various publications and events continue to support the mid-twentieth century idea that advertising is a capitalist tool used to promote 'democracy' through persuading consumers to buy products and services. Since we are now entering a post-Covid world that has rapidly changed how we work, communicate, and shop, the way advertising defines itself arguably should be rethought. That is why I have been pleased to edit this special issue of the journal where advertising is presented as a multi-faceted tool that can have the potential for motivating progressive behaviours within various cultures. For instance, 'The Palau Legacy Pledge: A Case Study of Advertising, Tourism, and the Protection of the Environment' where Ismael Medel explores the multi-award-winning tourism campaign for the island republic of Palau where visitors signed a pledge to access the island, demonstrating a 'delicate balance between conservationism and capitalism'. This case study provides evidence of how advertising can concretely benefit a society and the environment. Palau is an example for the tourism industry on how to modify consumer behaviour and at the same time preserve natural beauty. With capitalism often being blamed for 'climate change' this issue also includes the example of 'Complicated Green Advertising: Understanding the Promotion of Clothing Recycling Efforts', its research finding that ads that encourage recycling lead to consumers being confused, because these ads 'promote recycling while also promoting additional consumption.' The paper concludes with recommendations on how fashion brands can support environmentalism with more impact. 'Changing Masculinity, One Ad at a Time' by Knudsen and Andersen examines gender roles within western culture and takes a rhetorical perspective on how two different ad campaigns address the current debate concerning toxic masculinity. Their final summary recognises that advertising can change existing cultural stereotypes and influence how masculinity is defined.

Methods for improving the impact of 'socially conscious' messaging from creation to media placement is looked at by Ndasi and Ackay in their research 'Understanding Authenticity in Digital Cause-Related Advertising: Does Cause Involvement Moderate Intention to Purchase?'

Their research attempts to pin down what the word 'authenticity' really means, so that art directors can build more 'targeted' communications when creating messaging for 'social causes.' This is followed by Miriam Sorrentino's article that asks 'How Ambient Advertising is Uniquely Placed to Make Audiences Think?' The study interviews leading UK advertising industry creatives, and then describes and analyses an original campaign scenario to assess whether audiences will interact with 'ambient advertising' that is placed 'away from point of sale.' She argues that ambient advertising may offer a ready solution for 'smaller organisations and social activists seeking to do good.'

Three different researchers look at the processes of strategising in order to design more effective messaging for the human good. From Australia, Louise Johnston looks at 'Where Public Interest, Virtue Ethics and Pragmatic Sociology Meet: Modelling a Socially Progressive Approach for Communication.' She analyses and contrasts two important events, the 1929 'Torches of Freedom' parade in NYC, comparing it with the contemporary Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras parade. She concludes that what defines 'human good' changes 'over time' due to evolving attitudes within communities. In a separate study Breninger and Kaltenbacher analyse the importance of creativity and ethics working together in 'Changing Perceptions, Changing Lives – Promoting Intercultural Competence and Ethical Creativity through Advertising.' The researchers use neuroscience to analyse the intersection of creativity, ethics and culture to see how advertising can be even more effective in contributing to social change.

Practitioners of advertising will be pleased to see the views of one of the most well-respected creatives and founder of a London agency that was voted the most creative agency in the world by *Advertising Age* magazine, Gold Greenlees Trott (History of Advertising Trust, 2020). In our interview former copywriter and now author Dave Trott discusses: his entry into US advertising; why 89 per cent of advertising is pollution; why being a reject and rebel can make you a great creative; and how, upon returning to the UK he created a multimedia campaign designed to ask UK banks to eliminate third world debt. In my opinion, this remains, a wonderful early example of advertising for the human good.

As well as Covid-19 forcing changes in how we communicate, the global reaction to the George Floyd murder by policemen in the United States has also brought advertising and race into question. We have two papers from Latin America that look at racism in advertising, and suggest changes to 'process' and 'strategies.' First, Fernández Guerra analyses 'social issue advertising as a tool for social change' in her article 'Social Advertising and Social Change: Campaigns about Racism in Latin America and Mexico' by examining advertising messages that address 'the issue of racism.' She concludes with six recommendations on the design and implementation of anti-racism campaigns. The second paper has Juris Tipa exploring 'Colourism in Commercial and Governmental Advertising in Mexico: "International Latino", Racism and Ethics' concluding that the process of choosing actors is a racist one based on skin colour. Tipa recommends that this observation should first be discussed amongst advertisers, leading to a second phase of creating more inclusive messaging.

Building upon the ideas that my colleagues have explored for evolving the industry and its practices for the 'human good', another way to prepare advertising for the upcoming mid-century would be to decolonise. I believe that the advertising industry can demonstrate how the shackles of the legacies of colonisation can be removed to create a more egalitarian society by 'decolonizing the practice' (Asher 2017, 512), and become an example within the culture industries by removing or rewriting rules and concepts left by colonial-era thinking that still control or influence society (Jones 2020). One important place to start decolonising is within education. As well as learning, schools are where we can also 'unlearn' in order to 're-learn.' In their chapter titled 'Teaching Advertising for the Human Good' Rutherford and

Cownie give us an example of how consumers are demanding changes to brands in addressing social and environmental challenges. Their research has heavily influenced the redesign of an MA advertising programme at a leading UK university, and is an example of how future workers in advertising can lead the wider 'ideological' change in the creative industries.

We hope you enjoy this special issue 'Advertising for the Human Good' that brings together media and communication scholars with practitioners, and analyses how advertising has the potential for motivating progressive behaviours in the public. Our journal issue appears at the beginning of a movement that focuses on the positive effects of advertising on 'any' society, and observes how the evolved practice of advertising can work within different ideologies, with the objective of generating advertising for the human good.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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