

PRO-SOCIAL BRANDING  
REPRESENTED IN A CREATIVE CAMPAIGN FOR  
CROSLEY RADIO

by

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A THESIS


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## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

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Brands essentially have identities. These identities have typically marketed themselves as heroes by involving themselves in sustainable advertising. Recently, a new strategy has surfaced, pro-social advertising. Pro-social brands, as they have been titled, take a more politically disruptive and, at times, inspirational approach to the way they market themselves. Rather than donating to a cause (sustainable / hero advertising), brands are entering controversial conversations. These conversations push for consumer involvement and portray the brand identity as having a human spirit.

I have applied the idea of pro-social branding to a hypothetical campaign for Crosley Radios, a company that sells primarily turn tables. Crosley will involve themselves in the conversation of racial equality. Specifically, Crosley will be promoting the fight for equality of all races and will market this conversation through their products, turntables and vinyl records. The creative execution can be seen in an accompanying material, a fifty-page brand book and a creative pitch.

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## Table of Contents

Accompanying Materials	v
Chapter 1: Brand Identities	1
Chapter Two: Sustainable Advertising	4
Chapter Three: Pro-Social Explained	7
Chapter Four: Ethical Parameters	10
Chapter Five: A Shy Strategy	14
Chapter Six: The Rules	16
Chapter Seven: Human Over Hero	18
Bibliography	20

## **Accompanying Materials**

This is a creative thesis for the Advertising department of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication. Accompanying this supplementary paper is the Creative Campaign for Crosley Radios, explained through a fifty-page Brand Book. This paper is the supplement to the creative thesis. The paper highlights the topic of pro-social branding.

## Chapter 1: Brand Identities

Brands have an identity, whether they intend to or not. This identity is built off of several different outputs, conversations, and opinions. Companies have a tangible identity — based off of the products they sell, as well as user experience — and they have an intangible identity — based off the way consumers relate emotionally to the brand. These intangible identities are becoming a conversation amongst advertising professionals. Brands are starting to understand that they need to be paying attention to their tangible and intangible identities, and taking action to ensure they are seen in a positive light by their consumers. To do so, brands are starting to involve themselves in political and controversial conversations to inspire their consumers to lead positive change, this strategy is called Pro-Social branding, and it is proving to be a successful tactic of differentiating one brand from its competition.

Identities exist in two different forms. These forms include the individual ego and the social ego. Our individual ego represents the way we view ourselves, the conversations that we have within our heads and the characteristics we would label ourselves with. Our social ego is just the opposite. It is the way other individuals regard us, the feelings they have about us and the characteristics they believe we hold. These social egos begin to exist with just one encounter, or one conversation. These egos that exist within personalities, both individual and social, can also be applied to organizations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sachs, Jonah. "2015 Will Be the Year Brands Take a Public Stand on Social Issues." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, 02 Jan. 2015. Web. 01 Apr. 2016.

An example of intangible and social identity can be seen through the consumer perception of vehicle companies. Consumers see Honda vehicles as being an affordable, dependable option. They are cars for middle class families and their children. In 2016, Kelley Blue Book rated the Honda Civic as one of their 'Top Family Vehicles.'<sup>2</sup> On the opposite side, Jeep is perceived as being a company for the adventurer, far from the suburbs. If one looks at each company's array of commercial techniques they will see how these companies individual egos interact with their social egos.

Honda has recognized their social identity and recently, January 2016, had hopes of changing the public's perception. The goal was to go from the affordable and reliable option, to the 'cool' car on the road. They presented a new commercial. Their commercial stated, "The car that was once everyone's first, is now everyone's next."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Jeep currently has an individual identity that agrees with their social identity. In Jeep's Super Bowl commercial of 2016, they featured portraits of heroes, royalty, and thrill-seekers. The commercial stated, "I've traveled, trekked, wandered and roamed only to find myself right where I belong."<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, a consumer will purchase a product by weighing the variables of price, quality, and access. However, many companies operate within extremely similar arenas. So, these social identities typically enter the game when the consumer approaches a 'fork in the road.' Let's look at a hypothetical situation. Becky, an avid

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<sup>2</sup> KBB.com Editors. "16 Best Family Cars of 2016." *Kbb.com*. Kelley Blue Book Co., 4 Feb. 2016. Web. 25 Apr. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Honda TV Commercial – Introducing The All New 2016 Honda Civic – The Car That Was Once Everyone's First Is Now Everyone's Next – Start Something Special | TV Commercial Spots – Its All About The Ads! Prod. Honda. Youtube. Youtube, Jan. 2016. Web. 17 May 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Jeep Super Bowl Commercial 2016 - Portraits. Dir. Jeep. Youtube. Youtube, Jan. 2016. Web.

coffee consumer, is standing at a crossroads. She has to decide if she would like to purchase her morning cup of coffee at 'Moonbucks' or 'The Coffee Seed.' She enjoys each cup of coffee, they are the same in price, and each is a short walk from her house. How does she decide between the two locations? Well, Becky would categorize herself an environmentally aware individual. She has read that Moonbucks uses recycled cups and The Coffee Seed does not. So, Becky decides to go with the Moonbucks cup of coffee.

This hypothetical situation is an example of a consumer choosing a brand for its identity. Becky did not pick between the two coffee shops based off of the product, she picked based off the brands involvement in a bigger conversation; environmentalism. When brands compete in a similar arena (for example coffee) consumers are looking beyond the product and into the identity of the company. With this being said, new strategies of advertising have come into play. These strategies include pro-social branding and sustainable advertising. So, what is the difference between pro-social and sustainable brands?



## Chapter Two: Sustainable Advertising

Sustainable advertising is traditional. This strategy assumes a consumer will applaud and reward the company for being ‘good.’ It is a classic and safe strategy to win the hearts of consumers. Companies utilizing sustainable advertising involve themselves in conversations that portray the brand as a hero.

Often times this involves donating money to a charity.<sup>5</sup> One example of this is the ‘one for one’ program by Toms Shoe Company. The company agreed to donate a pair of shoes for each pair purchased. Contrary to some consumer beliefs, Toms is actually a for-profit company.<sup>6</sup> This sustainable tactic for advertising works because the consumer feels as though the money they spend on themselves is actually going to benefit others. In reality, the money is going into the pockets of wealthy CEO’s.

Additionally, this form of sustainable advertising has been shown to acquire a certain amount of brand loyalty from only a small niche of consumers. Eventually what happens is the company hits a point of diminishing returns. The truth behind this form of advertising is the company’s consumer base is not paying a great deal of attention to the maintenance of a carbon footprint, the output of each pair of shoes, or the efforts being made to recycle. Companies are promising to live up to a certain standard they must keep and eventually most consumers stop paying attention.

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<sup>5</sup> Sachs, Jonah

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, Elizabeth. "How Toms Made Hundreds of Millions of Dollars by Giving Shoes Away." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, 2 Jan. 2015. Web. 25 Apr. 2016.

One example of diminishing returns is the earlier example of Tom's Shoe Company. A consumer buys a pair of shoes thinking they are giving back to the community. However, their next pair of shoes will likely not be purchased from Tom's. Only a very small niche of Tom's consumer base is still paying attention to their one-for-one promise.

Today, the most obvious form of sustainable advertising is ironically through the concept of sustainability, specifically of 'going green.' A company tries to reduce their carbon footprint, recycle their materials during production, or use recycled materials for production. For some companies this is a conscience and respectable decision. For others it is a blatant form of identity branding. They want to come across as "the company that is green," because the truth is consumers will pay more to settle their conscience when spending. What these companies are hoping is their consumers will applaud them for their green efforts and in-turn remain loyal (disclaimer: this does not mean all companies are practicing sustainability to turn profit, there are also companies who are being responsible for all of the right reasons).

So, if a company is trying to create a brand identity and doesn't necessarily want to try and persuade consumers that they are the hero, what can they do? How does a company flaunt its identity without trying to save the planet, feed the worlds hungry, or wear a figurative cape?

The answer to this is simple. Instead of branding as a hero, a company can brand itself as a human. As previously discussed, companies have identities just the same as humans have identities. While most consumers would not necessarily consider corporate America to operate in any regards the same as a personality, it in many ways

does. The tactic of being human is not nearly as safe as the strategy behind sustainable advertising. However, it is much more authentic, much more real, and builds a much stronger foundation. This tactic is called pro-social branding.

## Chapter Three: Pro-Social Explained

The second, and less common, form of emotionally engaging with consumers is through pro-social branding. This tactic differs from sustainable advertising because it enters a controversial area of conversation. The goal of the brand in this situation is not necessarily be the hero, but to be relatable and human. As one knows, humans enter certain faucets of thinking and of opinion that may not resonate positively with the entire public. Pro-social branding is when companies to operate in the same way. Pro-social branding is not a safe and apolitical approach like sustainable advertising. As put by Jonah Sachs, in her article in *The Guardian*, “Pro-social brands are more politically disruptive and inspiring than basic sustainable brands and instead of focusing on what a brand has done internally to drive a better world, pro-social brands look outward to take a stand on key moral issues.”<sup>7</sup>

When companies start involving themselves in social conversations, the landscape of the conversation is altered because it is made appropriate and public. Companies can significantly increase the rate of change simply by initiating or pushing these conversations. Their involvement in the conversation makes the topic more accepted for casual discussion. The Huffington Post reported 27 companies that were not afraid to support the Supreme Court’s ruling on gay marriage. Among the 27 were Gap, Google, Facebook, eBay, Nike and Apple. Apple stated, “We strongly support marriage equality and we consider it a civil rights issue.” These companies controversial response to the ruling was not a safe stance. However, their reactions went

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<sup>7</sup> Sachs, Jonah

viral, and as a result consumers were involving themselves in the conversation on all social media platforms.<sup>8</sup>

When brands take a stance on controversial issues they encourage their consumers to stand with them. By doing this brands are speeding up the process of conversations. They are encouraging involvement in the topic and as a result, creating change at a faster pace than can be achieved just through individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Other topics of conversation that have been initiated and are being pushed by brands include; carbon pricing, racial justice, gender equality, minimum wage, gun control and climate change. Brands are involving themselves in these conversations and it is important to note they are approaching these issues by saying, “look, listen, and if you are one of our consumers, get involved,” rather than “here is our stance, now buy our stuff.”<sup>10</sup>

Another incredible example of pro-social branding was a partnership between rivals in 2014. Twenty-nine companies banded together to create Collectively.org, an online website aimed to create conversations that inspire climate change in a positive light, as opposed to the typical ‘doom and gloom’ conversations typically following the topic. The companies that banded together include the soda titans PepsiCo and Coca-Cola, global advertising companies WPP and Omnicom, and social media platforms Facebook, Google, and Twitter.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Fairchild, Caroline. "27 Companies That Aren't Afraid To Support The Supreme Court's Gay Marriage Rulings." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 26 June 2013. Web. 16 May 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Fairchild, Caroline

<sup>10</sup> Global Strategy Group. "Business and Politics: Do They Mix?" Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics (2014): n. pag. The Global Strategy Group, 2014. Web.

<sup>11</sup> Fairchild, Caroline

This effort shows a collaboration that in year's prior would have been unthinkable. Rivals banding together would have caused consumers to scratch their heads. However, international companies in large numbers coming together to promote social change only encourages individuals to do the same. Companies before, using the sustainable advertising approach, were not banding together. Instead, they were competing with each other for the 'hero' title. Although any effort towards a good cause is not condonable, banding together and showing an example for consumers has much higher praise. As a result, Collectively.org, from November 2015 to December 2015, increased its traffic by 300,000 visits.<sup>12</sup> That is the power of pro-social.

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<sup>12</sup> "Collectively.org Traffic Statistics." *SimilarWeb*. Google Analytics, n.d. Web. 16 May 2016.

## Chapter Four: Ethical Parameters

The biggest question regarding pro-social branding is, business and politics, should they mix? The truth is business corporations have already developed political identities. This ties back into the social ego and how a consumer views a business. For example, sixty-nine percent of consumers view Wells Fargo as republican, seventy-seven percent of consumers view MTV as democratic, and sixty-five percent of consumers view Whole Foods as democratic.<sup>13</sup> So, whether they intended to or not, brands are seen as having political identities.

This still does not answer the question. Considering brands have unintentionally found themselves with political identities, does this give them a right to participating in political conversations? The Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey amongst a vast representation of Americans. They found that the majority of the populations believe that companies should take a stand for what they believe in, whether the topic is controversial or not. From the year 2013 to 2014 there was a 5% increase of people who believed corporations should have the freedom to express their opinions. There was an 8% increase in individuals who believed it is important for companies to take action to address important issues. Then finally, an 8% increase in individuals who believe corporations have the power to influence social change. This means, 89% of Americans believe that companies can effect political conversations and the public opinion is quickly shifting to encourage corporation's involvement in the political sphere.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Global Strategy Group

<sup>14</sup> Global Strategy Group

So, what are the ethical parameters of a corporation involving itself in a social conversation? A brand getting involved in a conversation explicitly to capitalize off of consumers with the same opinion is unethical. Pro-social advertising can only exist ethically within set boundaries. The safest way of remaining within ethical boundaries is identifying whether or not pro-social conversation correlates to the company's line of work. For example, Tiffany's featured a 2015 print advertisement for wedding bands that featured two men. This advertisement was a pro-social brand tactic promoting gay marriage. Tiffany's involvement in the conversation of gay marriage directly correlated to their product, engagement jewelry.<sup>15</sup> A company that failed in comparison was Chick-Fil-A, whose involvement in the same conversation did not correlate to their restaurant chain.<sup>16</sup> This statement received an extremely heavy backlash from consumers, for a reason addressed later in the paper.

A company integrating themselves into a political conversation for monetary gain is wrong. A company that wishes to involve themselves in pro-social branding should only do so with the intention to inspire their consumers. If the company decides to get involved in a conversation that does not correlate to their line of work, that is not unethical. It just takes more thoughtfulness and action from the company. This is because the company's leaders and employees must demonstrate support of the opinion in every action.

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<sup>15</sup> Angyal, Chloe, and Zach Wahls. "The Tiffany's Same-Sex Marriage Ad Is Radical—But It's Also Retrograde." *TPM: Cafe*. TPM Media LLC, 12 Jan. 2015. Web.

<sup>16</sup> Global Strategy Group



Disney is a great example of this. The company has involved themselves in the conversation regarding minimum wage. Their CEO Robert Iger stated, “It is our intention to behave very responsibly and fairly with all of our cast members and compensate them in ways that reflect the value that they create for the company and for our customers.”<sup>17</sup> Months later Disney announced a 25% increase in pay at the Florida theme park. Moving the minimum wage salary from \$8.03 to \$10.00. McDonalds and Starbucks also made general statements supporting the raise of the minimum wage.<sup>18</sup> Because Disney took action on the issue with their own employees rather than issuing a general statement their support of the issue is perceived as the most appropriate form of involvement.

Pro-social branding can also occur naturally for a company after experiencing a positive or negative encounter with the issue, whether it correlates to their business or not. A good example of this was when Chipotle spoke out against gun control. They released a statement following an episode at one of their establishments. Gun rights advocates were broadcasting assault rifles inside of the restaurant. The company has since established a no gun policy within their restaurants; they publically announced they felt consumers holding firearms created “an environment that is potentially intimidating or uncomfortable for many of our customers.”<sup>19</sup> Because they established a position around the importance of safety for their employees and their customers they have since been able to speak regarding an issue that otherwise would have been

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<sup>17</sup> Palermi, Christopher. "Disney Offers 25% Raise Over Two Years to Florida Workers." *Bloomberg.com*. Bloomberg, 6 Apr. 2014. Web. 16 May 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Global Strategy Group

<sup>19</sup> Global Strategy Group

inappropriate. In regard to inappropriate, Chick-Fil-A, as previously mentioned, publically announced an opinion against gay marriage. During an interview with the *Baptist Press* in 2012, President Dan Cathy said that his company runs under “biblical principles” and is “very much supportive of the family – the biblical definition of the family unit.” This comment saw extreme backlash from the media overnight. The company went from a well-liked fast food company to a spotlight position for inappropriate expression of opinion. Chick-Fil-A consumers who shared the opinion against gay marriage remained loyal but consumers who disagreed boycotted the company for months.<sup>20</sup>

Recently, Cathy admitted to having made a mistake. He stated, “Every leader goes through different phases of maturity, growth and development and it helps by [recognizing] the mistakes that you make.” Admitting his mistakes was beneficial to the company and consumers were ultimately forgiving. However, the problem has not been completely fixed. In 2012, 45% of consumers felt that the company operated inappropriately, and after Cathy’s apology the percentage moved to 59%.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, pro-social brands are brands that involve themselves in human discussion. Their involvement has the intention to inspire their consumers to stand with them, to help create change and make positive differences. The only way pro-social branding works, is if that is the explicit intention. This leads us into the conversation of the line within pro-social branding. There is a line between intention for positive change, and intention for positive revenue.

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<sup>20</sup> Global Strategy Group

<sup>21</sup> Global Strategy Group

## Chapter Five: A Shy Strategy

So far, companies have only dipped their feet into the idea of pro-social branding. There have been print advertisements, public statements, side projects and collaborations. However, there has not been a company to dive completely and fully into a pro-social idea. Thus far the largest pro-social campaign came from Ben & Jerry's. This campaign was called 'The Stampede.'

The Stampede began in 2012 and is being led by Ben Cohen. The topic of the pro-social campaign is finance, with the specific goal of ridding money from politics. Instead of making a company press statement or tweeting about his beliefs, Cohen has been physically stamping money with a variety of messages, for example "Keep Money Out of Politics," and "The System Is Not Broken It's Fixed." The Ice Cream CEO discovered a way to legally defame paper money. He is selling these stamps online so consumers can participate in the process. As of May 1, 2016, 60,860 stamps have been sold to consumers and over 170 million impressions have been made.<sup>22</sup>

Two important notes on 'The Stampede' campaign; first, the opinion is not directly tied to the product of ice cream, yet there has been close to zero backlash on the ethical parameters of the campaign. This is because the campaign is clearly an opinion close to Ben Cohen's heart and Ben & Jerry's is not driving any profit from the campaign. Second, contrary to popular belief the actual company of Ben & Jerry's has had limited involvement in the campaign other than the two notorious CEO's involvement.<sup>23</sup> The public has shown great support of this campaign. Ben & Jerry's

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<sup>22</sup> "Stamp Money Out Of Politics." The Stampede. Stamp Stampede, May 2016. Web. 17 May 2016.

<sup>23</sup> "Stamp Money Out Of Politics"

(although backing the most aggressive pro-social campaign to date) could have involved themselves on a greater scale. In fact, arguments could be made that they should have given the campaign had so much success and so little backlash.

The stampede is an excellent example of a campaign leading a conversation, getting consumers inspired and accelerating the conversation. Although not directly linked, Ben and Jerry's is setting a good example.

## Chapter Six: The Rules

As previously discussed, pro-social branding has a higher risk than sustainable advertising, but within pro-social branding there are degrees of risk depending on circumstances. So, how does a company execute a pro-social campaign that is ethical? What precautions can tentative pro-social companies make to ensure no backlash from consumers? Essentially, how does a company do this and what are the rules?

Global Strategy found that there was a distinct difference between theoretically what consumers found appropriate and what their real-world reactions were to pro-social actions. In the real world consumers react to pro-social campaigns based on a handful of variables. In large part, consumers are reacting to how appropriate they feel that the corporation's statement is.

They found that first, "Corporations can enhance their standing by tying their stance to their industry." We have discussed this using the examples of Tiffany's. Another example of this is hotels.com's campaign fighting for vacation time for American workers. Their stance was clearly related to their industry, travel and vacation. The campaign was titled the Vacation Equality Project and 75% of the public found it appropriate.<sup>24</sup> However, arguments could be made this was not in line with pro-social branding. This campaign was so aggressively correlated with their industry, and had it been successful would have turned heavy profit for the company. Again, the goal of pro-social advertising should not be profit. It should be to try and connect with consumers and give back. The goal is identity.

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<sup>24</sup> Global Strategy Group

The second insight gathered by Global Strategy was “Companies can enhance their standing by tying their stance directly to their business; and even more so by demonstrating *action* on issues important to their business and employees.” A somewhat obvious insight, that seems to be overlooked by many companies. Any company can make a public statement in favor of or against any social conversations. However, consumers are aware that large businesses have it within their power to take action on the issue. If a company releases a statement, for example, in favor of raising the minimum wage, but doesn’t take action on responsibly compensating their own employees, they are making themselves look hypocritical.

More so than ever consumers are paying attention. CEO’s are put in the spotlight and their decisions are branded with their companies. With the rise of social media and the internet, companies have to be extremely particular about what they publically say. If a company makes a public announcement regarding a social issue, the entire company has to be ready to act in such a way that represents that statement.

In many ways, the spotlight consumers have on companies upholds the authenticity of pro-social branding. This means, a brand has to whole-heartedly believe the issue they decide to take a stand on. If the company, its CEO and employees do not uphold the belief in their everyday actions – consumers can be sure that the authenticity of the campaign is fake.

The goal of pro-social is to be human, to be authentic. These campaigns have to be built from the heart of the company. That means they are built from the heart of the company’s employees.

## Chapter Seven: Human Over Hero

The CEO of Starbucks, Howard Schultz, wrote a book titled *Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built A Company One Cup At A Time*. In this book he states,

“In this ever-changing society, the most powerful and enduring brands are built from the heart. They are real. Their foundations are stronger because they are built with the strength of the human spirit, not an ad campaign. The companies that are lasting are those that are authentic.”

Although this statement’s intention was not to address the idea of pro-social branding, Schultz provides a great insight to why the strategy is a rising topic on websites such as *The Huffington Post*, *Adweek*, *The Gaurdian*, *The New York Times*, and many more.

Consumers want to see good happening in the world, specifically they want to see their money going to companies that they can trust to do good. While sustainable advertising and the ‘hero’ mentality is far from disappearing from the advertising world, experts are predicting that a new strategy will take over. The new strategy is the human approach, pro-social branding.

The majority of Americans right now believe that corporations have the power to create change, and they are applauding the companies that are taking initiative. In upcoming years, consumers will see more and more companies utilizing this strategy from branding. In time, they may even come to expect this type of tactic from their favorite brands.

The simplest way of understanding how exactly this strategy works and why it is works is to break it down into its simplest form. Companies are composed of people. People have opinions and beliefs. If companies have the power to create change, to authentically do so they must dive into the beliefs of the people that compile the

organization. If they do this the company will live and breathe from its heart. More so, the company will live and breathe as a human, rather than a hero. As beautifully stated by Howard Schultz, the companies that are the strongest are built with the strength of the human spirit.

Pro-social advertising is the future. The first company to dive head first into a campaign that embodies what its employees believe will see great success and will lead a revolution of the new form of advertising. Brands have identities whether they intend to or not. Brands should start advertising their true identities, rather than allow for the American consumer base to create a social ego that does not align with the individual identity of the company.



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