

Advertisements are present everywhere

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Advertisements are present everywhere. They fill magazines with their attention grabbing imagery, they are splashed all over billboards in urban cities throughout the world, and they intrude our minds with vast amount of images, some making profound impacts, and others not so much.

Advertisements emit images that release endless amounts of feelings and emotions. Some advertisements can make us happy, sad, or both simultaneously.

Some make us think, act, or want. They are a powerful tool used by companies to inject ideas, beliefs, and possibilities into the public's minds, who in most cases, underestimate and rarely think about the significant impact it may have in their daily lives. Just as every company is different, so are their advertisements. From models to cars, clothes to anti-war images, advertisements carry symbols and meanings that define the company they are advertising for. In this paper I will be specifically targeting the clothing company, " United Colors of Benetton", and the advertisements they have been producing for over a decade that have been causing controversy and animosity from thousands of people all over the world.

United Colors of Benetton have produced some extraordinary and unique advertisements. Benetton's originality in their advertisements is unlike any other clothing company. Instead of advertising their clothes on beautiful female and male models, Benetton uses real people, and situations and dilemmas in the real world to get their name across. " Benetton has taken images of human suffering and placed them within their advertising page, at least structurally linking them with issues of personal consumption and desire" i.

Their controversial ads are notorious for the shock value they exhibit. People sometimes cannot believe that a certain advertisement is actually aimed at selling clothes. This "shock value" technique has recently been the new trend in 20th century advertising culture. It is a clever tactic that has recently been employed by various companies, agencies, and institutions throughout the world.

"Pressure groups, charities and even governments have employed graphic imagery and blunt slogans to highlight everything from animal cruelty to the dangers of drink-driving. Canadian smokers are bombarded with pictures of diseased organs on the health warnings plastered across their cigarette packets" ii

Benetton's aim is for the public to see their distinct ads and remember them. They want people to see an advertisement and think about it, discuss it, love it, and even hate it. In their minds, any publicity is good publicity. They believe that their unique ads will drive you to their stores, and it does just that. Benetton's profits almost doubled to nearly two-hundred-forty-five million Euros (392 million Canadian dollars) in four years (1996-2000)iii. The question that lingers on everyone's mind is how do you make someone remember an ad when they are bombarded by hundreds of advertisements daily? The answer; Shock them. Unlike normal clothing companies whose aim is to only sell their clothes, "[Benetton] believes [that they] can do more than sell products. [They] can broaden minds" iv. Benetton uses advertisements featuring people dying of AIDS, dead soldiers, cemeteries, poverty stricken children, etc.

Their hope lies within the public. They want people to see their advertisements and take it to heart. Just as the Du Maurier cigarette company uses pictures of diseased organs on their cigarette packs in hopes of getting people to take action and quit smoking, Benetton uses real life images in their ads to instil their humanitarian cause in the rest of the world. These graphic images are not sugar coated and fancy like advertisements that other large clothing companies use. Instead they are meant to startle or shock the public and create an image in people's minds that may create concern for the well being of people, animals, and the planet, and at the same time, create a curiosity that would impel someone to visit their clothing stores and learn more about them.

" Benetton Group's advertising campaigns are not only a means of communication but an expression of our time. Through their universal impact, they have succeeded in attracting the attention of the public and in standing out amid the current clutter of images" v. Benetton has a hard time understanding why their advertisements spark so much controversy. All of their ads feature real life situations. Nothing is made up or fake about their ads. They are not purposely out there to exploit human suffering. Instead they are trying to demonstrate the extent of the problem. Many of their ads feature issues of multiculturalism, peace, the tragic effects of war, and disease.

Many people are aware of these problems but choose to turn their heads or forget about them, instead of doing something to help the cause. "

Benetton's familiar tradition of campaigns are centred on images intended to

promote peace, tolerance, multiculturalism, and to challenge stereotypes" vi. Two specific advertisements that I found to be very clever and interesting are those that promote the breaking down of race discrimination. The two ads remind the public that no matter how we look on the outside, everyone looks the same on the inside; literally. One of these advertisements has a picture of three real hearts.

They are obviously not human hearts, but the viewer of the ad gets the idea. On each of the three hearts it says one word; Black, White, and Yellow. As mentioned before, the advertisement hopes to remind and convince the public that although we might look different on the outside, that on the inside we are the exact same. Benetton tries to promote equality regardless of colour, race, or religion.

The second such advertisement that hopes to communicate and promote the need for compassion with all other human beings is that of three girls. The picture shows the three girls, one of African descent, one of Caucasian descent, and the third girl of Oriental descent, with their heads side by side, sticking out their tongues. Once again, Benetton shows that regardless of the way we look on the outside, that on the inside we are all the same. All our tongues are the same colour, and look the same. The same goes with our hearts. It is these types of advertisements that define Benetton and their cause.