

Controversial Advertising Campaigns That Backfired

align pull outrage condemned goodwill alleged
Insensitivity tone-deaf lingered backlash

Pepsi's "Live for Now" Protest Ad



Pepsi's 2017 "Live for Now" ad starring Kendall Jenner quickly became a prime example of how not to co-opt social movements for advertising purposes. The commercial showed Jenner abandoning a photoshoot to join a protest, where she eventually hands a can of Pepsi to a police officer, seemingly resolving the tension between the protestors and the authorities. The

ad attempted to 1)_____ the brand with activism but was widely 2)_____ for trivializing serious social issues, particularly in light of the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement. The imagery of Jenner, a white supermodel, handing a soda to a police officer to defuse a protest was viewed as 3)_____, given the real-world struggles faced by marginalized communities in confrontations with law enforcement. Critics pointed out that the ad seemed to reduce the complex realities of protests to a superficial moment of corporate 4)_____. Social media users flooded platforms with memes and criticism, forcing Pepsi to 5)_____ the ad within 24 hours of its release. The company issued an apology, but the controversy 6)_____, and the campaign became a lasting symbol of corporate misjudgment.

Dolce & Gabbana's Chinese Ad Campaign



Dolce & Gabbana's 2018 ad campaign intended to celebrate the fusion of Italian and Chinese culture ahead of a Shanghai fashion show. The ads, however, sparked immediate 7)_____ for their portrayal of a Chinese model struggling to eat Italian food with chopsticks. The campaign was widely criticized for its racial stereotyping and cultural 8)_____, with many accusing the luxury brand of reducing Chinese culture to a caricature. The situation escalated when 9)_____ racist comments from co-founder Stefano Gabbana surfaced on social media, further inflaming public 10)_____. Chinese celebrities boycotted the brand, and Dolce & Gabbana's highly anticipated runway show in Shanghai was cancelled. Despite issuing an apology, the brand suffered significant reputational damage in China, a key market for luxury goods. Dolce & Gabbana continues to face challenges in rebuilding its image in the region.