

WHY A LITTLE BIT OF MARKETING DOES YOU GOOD, ESPECIALLY AT CHRISTMAS

My grandpa, who's a Quaker, used to disapprove of the fact that I ventured into marketing, but he's coming round to my way of thinking, even at the grand age of 92. He is suspicious of marketing (in his mind - a term synonymous with extracting money from a gullible party, for the benefit of corporate greed) and doesn't believe in profit, even though profit itself is not a bad thing.

I bring this issue up because in case you hadn't noticed, it's going to be Christmas soon and as usual any company which can exploit Christmas as a commercial theme is doing so. But before we exchange our Christmas wreath for cynicism on our front door, sometimes marketing can be beneficial and the creativity in marketing campaigns can be enjoyed by the consumer.

Take for instance (but not for instant) Starbucks Coffee Company, no longer is it just a coffee company! If you're still refusing to do your Christmas shopping online, marketing executives at Starbucks have come up with a few ideas so that you can break the shopping up with interludes of Gingerbread Latte, Eggnog Latte or Toffee Nut Latte (http://starbucks.co.uk/en-GB/_Favorite+Beverages/Christmas+Beverages.htm). You could even come back after the shopping and have a Chocolate Mint Bliss or Mint Chocolate Chip Frappuccino. If Marketing brings Gingerbread Lattes, then it's got to be a good thing.

It's not just the high street shops which are getting festive. Online stores are getting into the Christmas spirit too, even finance companies; the traditional residences of Scrooge type characters. Money.net, a personal finance information research specialist, has brought out a Christmas finance guide (<http://www.money.net.co.uk/christmas-savings-guide/index.shtml>), with a range of money-saving tips to help the innocent consumer navigate their way past loan sharks who feed on the financial difficulties of certain families, particularly at Christmas.

But lets not dwell on the doom and gloom, lets think about the children, what's marketing doing for them? Well... the Early Learning Centre has developed a special Christmas section (<http://www.elc.co.uk/category-720>) on its website to inspire parents, grandparents and relatives with ideas of suitable gifts for the children. If your daughter is more into Stevie Wonder than Golden Wonder, then she might be impressed with the Pink Keyboard And Stool; though remember, musical toys last for years not just for Christmas, it's your sanity at stake.

But Christmas isn't just for the kids, it's for the "big kids" too. Justtoys is a site which sells toys for parents, buying toys for their children. If my parents are reading this, or even my colleagues, I quite fancy the Radio Control Dalek <http://www.justtoys.com/toy.asp/Toy/33/buy/radio-control-dalek.htm> which offers seven phrases triggered by buttons on the remote control, 360 degree on the spot rotational movement and the Dome and Eyestalk move from side to side as it moves. Beats slippers and writing paper any day.

Marketing and commercial competition has also made a fantastic choice available on the internet and it gives us ideas, when we've run out of inspiration ourselves. So whilst we need to remain sceptical about advertising, there are some advantages to profit investment ...

... and Starbucks Chocolate Mint Bliss is one of them.