

FAST COMPANY

Clean Toilet-Bowl Obsession, And Other Ways Mom Marketing Fails

By Katherine Wintsch, May 17 2012



There's a new bravado among moms. Celebrity moms are writing books (Brooke Burke's *The Naked Mom*, Tina Fey's *Bossypants*), and everyday moms are coming out of the woodwork (Tiger Mom, Teen Mom, Attachment Mom) in an effort to prove to the world that there is no one "right" way to be a mom.

It's a much-needed glimpse into the changing face of motherhood. These women are speaking up and teaching the world a thing or two about what it's like to be a mom.

Unfortunately, most marketers don't seem to have gotten the memo.

Why are moms in commercials so obsessed with cleaning? Why are they grinning from ear to ear? And why are they always thin, white, married and upper-middle class? Perhaps marketers also need to get the memo that 41 percent of all births in 2010 were to single mothers.

However, there is hope. Several big marketers are raising the bar of creativity with their advertising to moms. We saw the first a year ago with the overwhelming appeal of spots like Toyota Sienna's "Swagger Wagon," Volkswagen's "The Force" and Walmart's "Conveyor Belt" series

A few of my latest favorites include:

KRAFT shows its heritage and humor in "A Mother's Betrayal," its spot where a son finds Mom and her book club friends indulging in bowls of KRAFT Mac & Cheese.

Recognizing the hardest job in the world is also the best job in the world, Procter & Gamble honors everything that all moms do to help their children succeed by showcasing the amazing moms behind Olympic athletes at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Just in time for Mother's Day, J&J reminded us that we're doing OK. Kudos to J&J for celebrating that moms don't need to strive for perfection.

I would be remiss to not mention that many ads that moms themselves love aren't "mom ads" at all. When asked to state their favorite commercial of all times, FreeCreditScore.com, Budweiser, and GEICO consistently rank among moms' favorites. Proof that you don't have to show a mom to actually speak to moms. Moms are human beings and we want to laugh, too.

Let's leverage this seismic shift in the face of motherhood to do a better job of understanding and marketing to moms. Being a mom is complex—it comes with lots of emotional highs and lows and there's no one "right" way to be a mom. Moms across America are turning their formerly shy statements—"Am I doing this right?"—into bold proclamations—"Here's how I do it!" Marketers would be wise follow suit and be more provocative, more interesting, and more creative.