

# 2006 Best and Worst Marketing to Girls Campaigns

By Sharon Lamb, Ed.D. and Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D.

Authors of *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes*

In a year in which Pole Dancing Kits got taken off the toy shelf, French Maid Halloween costumes were all the rage for teen girls, and Nelly Furtado's boast "Promiscuous" topped the charts, talking heads keep telling us girls are doing well and there's a boy crisis. If we let down our defenses, marketers have even easier access to our daughters. Here are the top and bottom 5 ways this year's marketers have played into our worst stereotypes and our grandest hopes for raising healthy daughters in this marketing-saturated world.

## Worst Marketing Campaigns:

**Dora the Princess:** Dora's makeover from adventurer to little princess, from exploring the world to selling stereotypes through her kitchen sets, lip gloss, and cash registers, is one of the worst marketing decisions for girls.

**Bratz Party Plane with "Juice Bar":** Bratz hot tubs, a runway board game, makeup kits, movies, Saturday morning cartoons, and a magazine market to girls a teen life that sets them up to drink their cosmos, flirt with boys, and go clubbing just as soon as they get into middle school. Thankfully Bratz padded bras for 6 year olds were pulled off the market in Australia where they were they tested for sale at Targets. Disingenuous marketing types claimed that these helped little girls be modest as they developed.

**American Girl Selling Body Consciousness:** When American Girl was bought out by Mattel, it didn't take the new parent company long to partner with Bath and Body Works to sell body lotion, fragrances, and even lip gloss to the little girls who buy these dolls to enact early American history. Barbie collector catalogues are being sent to all the American Girl owners now, with categories like "pin up girls".

**Boys Only Movies:** *Ice Age 2*, *Cars*, *The Wild*, and *Over the Hedge*. Girls who encountered any of the massive marketing for these movies will have seen over and over the "boys only" message. Only boys are permitted to get wild and crazy, to be leaders, rescuers, goofballs, and sidekicks, to go on adventures, to save the day.

**Victoria's Secret Stuffed Animal Giveaway:** Victoria's Secret's Pink line sold at the front of the store was clearly a way to bring younger girls into the store and get mom approval. Why else would they give a cute toy away to anyone who purchased an item from the Pink line, featuring sweats and p.j.s rather than the black lace thongs and see-throughs at the next counter.

## Best Marketing Campaigns:

**Dove Campaign For Real Beauty:** Dove dove into the Superbowl commercial scene with their Campaign for Real Beauty and a powerful statement about the impact of media ideals on girls' self esteem. They followed up with an ad showing first a physical and then a digital makeover of a model, designed to illustrate why our perception of beauty is so distorted. They use real little girls, all shapes and races, from cute to awkward, but all beautiful.

**Maria Sharapova “I Feel Pretty” Nike Ad:** In spite of all the sexy photos and Sports Illustrated swimsuit shots, this funny ad puts it all in proper perspective on match day. The fans, cameraman, ball girl, line judges, and commentators—all singing lines from the song— “ I feel pretty, oh so pretty. I feel pretty, and witty, and gay” —to Sharapova as she drives to the match, walks into the stadium, and readies herself to play, stop abruptly after her first powerful strokes. The message: it ain’t about pretty; it’s about skill and power.

**Super Mario Princess Peach:** Finally, Princess Peach gets to do some rescuing. The ad shows a group of little girls dressed in princess peach outfits running through tires, crawling through mud, and breaking through barriers to save Mario. It’s great to see pink as a power color!

**Mother Love:** While T-mobile made a lot of people laugh at the stereotyped chatty cheerleading teen, we love the Cellular One commercial that undoes a typical mother/daughter argument – “Why do you insist on treating me like an adult?” shouts the teen girl. “Because you insist on acting like one,” the mom yells back. This ad called “Mother Love” ends with “You’re the most grateful little...”

**Girls Go Tech Ad Campaign:** The Girls Scouts and Ad Council teamed up to create a series of GirlsGoTech print, radio and TV ads that show parents supporting young girls’ passion for science. In a TV spot a young girl asks her father why the sky is blue. When he sweetly responds, “To match your pretty eyes,” she replies, “Nope. Not even close,” and gives him the scientific explanation. In a radio spot a mother and her young daughter sing a version of Twinkle Twinkle that describes the birth of star: “Twinkle twinkle little star, You’re a ball of gas that’s very far...” This campaign won a Grand Good Award from the Advertising Women of New York, and for good reason.

#### **Worst Negative Trend:**

Increase in product placement in children’s movies and toy sets, viral marketing, and creation of entertainment based around a brand or product character.

#### **Best Positive Trend:**

Parent Power and a new level of involvement: U.S. parents successfully protested Hasbro’s plans to create Pussycat Dolls, based on the sexy singing group; Australian protest prevented the Bratz “bralettes” from hitting Target stores there; British citizens caused a store in London to pull a pole-dancing set sold in the toy department of a London store.

© 2006 Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D and Sharon Lamb, Ed.D

[www.packaginggirlhood.com](http://www.packaginggirlhood.com)

[www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org](http://www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org)