For better or for worse, social media has become the most influential media format so far this century. Its amazing growth can be attributed to a few key characteristics. The first is freedom. Using this format “feels like freedom”! Anyone can say anything at anytime for any reason. This is also its greatest downfall. While we are free to share information and show off our creativity, social media will always have the stigma of being untrustworthy. We will always need to take it with a grain of salt. Something I beg of you to teach your children. Their (mental and physical) lives depend on knowing that what is online is fantasy, not reality.

With our new-found ability to communicate directly, a new form of advertising was born. While it was expected to show explosive growth, the method with which one advertises on social media proves elusive to many of the former advertising giants. Consumers now have the upper hand in what they are being fed, at least in the retail advertising space. Companies must work harder on identifying issues that face their customers’ cultures and create a narrative that stirs the minds of the group without ruffling the feathers.

I was excited to learn about the challenge of advertising in today’s social media as it indicates that we still have some control. This was a new concept for me and I really enjoyed reading about the struggles that were behind ad campaigns that I had witnessed, but did not truly see.

There is no doubt that social media advertising must be a consideration for every major business, and that their narrative must be truthful and sincere. There is no greater shame than that cast by the culture of your audience. And by audience I mean target customers. More importantly, small businesses need to take advantage of social media. They are positioned at the epicenter of their culture and have direct contact with their customers. Small business “street smarts”, combined with the right cultural opportunity can launch the next Chipotle.