

COLUMNS

## Balenciaga: A practice in emotional avoidance behavior

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Balenciaga's brand has become synonymous, or more likely eponymous, with controversy. Rather than face up to its mistakes, the brand instead practices avoidance behavior.

In psychology, avoidance behavior is characterized as behavior that people use to escape or distract themselves from difficult thoughts, feelings and situations specifically, Balenciaga's attempt to deflect its responsibility by blaming others.

Blame duck

Blaming others can be considered "blame avoidance" and can be considered another form of "emotional avoidance," done to evade the feelings of powerful, uncomfortable attitudes or sentiments.

For readers who may not follow Balenciaga, below is a brief recap of what this author dubs as the Balenciaga Child Porn Chronicles ("BCPC").

Balenciaga released two campaigns in approximately one month's time that strongly alluded to child pornography.

Wittingly or not, Balenciaga's advertisements evoked outrage. Both ads left viewers of single mind what was Balenciaga thinking?

One advertisement was for a children's teddy bear bag dressed in bondage like gear black leather, chains and harnesses. It featured a variety of children holding the teddy bear handbag and displayed an assortment of accessories.

Unfortunately, some of those accessories looked like they were bondage paraphernalia.

The other advertisement was for a handbag collaboration with adidas that included in the marketing of the bag, a pile of legal documents, that included the text of a Supreme Court decision related to child pornography.

Now for the emotional avoidance.

Photo suit

Rather than, to put it colloquially, "face the music," Balenciaga, instead, sued the photographer it hired for the teddy bear bag campaign.

Therefore, the brand's initial reaction to its BCPC chronicles was to blame the third-party it handed selected to produce the campaign, hiding from questions related to the owner of the campaign's vision and approval process.

Ironically, blaming others likely stems from a sense of being "right" or "justified" in a particular action or inaction.

Since the filing of the lawsuit and the backlash it faced, Balenciaga has since dropped the lawsuit and made several public apologies.

Although a cliché, the apology can be seen as too little too late.

When this author represents media production companies like the one hired by Balenciaga, it includes language that the brand will be onsite and approve or disapprove, in real time, the campaign in question.

Presumably, Balenciaga was present during the photo shoot.

When this author represents brands, it includes language in the contract with media producers that the photo shoot, video, etc. must meet the editorial and aesthetic requirements of the brand and capture of the message that the brand chooses to induce.

Likely, Balenciaga was intimately involved with the production of the campaign from start to finish.

The world awaits to witness whether Balenciaga will get its groove back.

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