

WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

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Abstract

Advertising is a very important and powerful tool for companies to attract consumers. Companies spend huge sums of money to fight against the consumer's attention deficits. That is why they try to make their ads interesting, more attractive, appealing, sexier, exciting. However, at the same time, advertising is a reflection of existing social, economic, political, scientific, technological, cultural, and moral values of a society.

Over the past 100 years or so, research has shown that advertising has manipulated and distorted the real image of women. Companies do not portray women as powerful and intelligent persons, but on contrary, they were presented stereotypically as housewives or sexual objects and dependent on men. In almost all advertisements, the woman was presented as naive, unintelligent, weak, submissive and obedient creature.

In the 21st century, advertisements portray women in ideal proportions, with beautiful physical attributes, skinny, tall, blonde, brittle, delicate. They create another problem now, for ordinary women and girls who want to copy those models. Today ads impose problems such as depression, malnutrition, low self-esteem, underestimation, complexes, low self-value.

The main challenge is to make pressure on advertising companies to portray women in a more positive way, as a role model in a society. Women have to be shown in normal sizes, different colors and shapes, with different business careers, that promote health, care and self-esteem.

Keywords: *Women, advertising, consumers, stereotypes, attention deficit, social values*

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1. Introduction

With rare exceptions, women throughout history have been systematically and continuously "removed" from civilization, historical events, and on the margins of active

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involvement in public, cultural, political life, and the arts. Because of her beauty and feminine eros, she was misunderstood and accused, always confronting to male power and the patriarchal cultural matrix. The advertising companies were not exception.

Clay (2017) says: "Advertising is a key part of popular culture and a reflection of social norms. The progress that has been made in our advertising of the portrayal of women mirrors how society has developed".

Advertising plays a major role in influencing and transmitting social values. The portrayal of women in advertising is an issue that has received a great deal of attention through the years. Advertisements reflect the stereotype that women do not do important things, are dependent on men, lack individuality are regarded by men primarily as sex objects, are preoccupied with beauty and motherhood and should be in home. (Gulati, 2014). Women were viewed as "things", objects of male sexual desire, and/or part of the merchandise rather than people (Hall, Crum, 1994). Body exposure and frequency of these ads have increased at an alarming rate over time. These chest, leg, buttock, and crotch shots increase the stereotypes and images that women are "bodies", rather than "somebodies" (with personalities) (Hall, Crum, 1994).

Over time, the role of women in advertising has changed. She becomes equal to the man, becomes independent, self-confident and a person who knows what she wants, and can make decisions on her own. But although her portrait has changed, the ads bring a new problem in modern times. In the ads, women are self-sufficient, happy and satisfied, portrayed in many professions (which in the past were considered male exclusively). The women in the ads are ideal, with beautiful proportions, with thick blond hair, beautiful eyes, slender bodies, slim, gentle, fragile. This ideal of a woman becomes a dream for every ordinary woman or girl. Unable to recognize that it is "an artificial beauty" (too much makeup, technically visual changes, corrections), ordinary women suffer from the inability to achieve that. Advertising creates new problems, such as depression, malnutrition, low self-esteem, and frustration.

Today, there are examples of companies trying to portray women not stereotypically, but in a new, positive and real light. Some magazines such as Vogue promised to be "ambassadors for a healthy image" (Cohen, 2012). That magazine's "Health Initiative" promised to not include models with eating disorders or under the age of 16 in the editorial pages of the 19 international editions of Vogue. However, study showed that the majority of women said they were willing to buy magazines featuring heavier models, but most believe that clothes look better on thin models (Garner, 1997)

Company Dove (Sutton, 2009), has different experience. Her brand manager Katie Adams noted: "The Campaign for Real Beauty has continued to challenge the narrow definition of beauty. Our research shows that women want to see more realistic representations of beauty in the media and advertising, so it is no wonder that the campaign has continued to resonate with millions of women worldwide."

2. History of women in advertising

It seems that the quote of Shirley Chisholm that “The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, “It’s a girl!” is true. Men and women differ in many ways, so it should not be surprising that advertisements portray men and women differently.

However, from today’s perspective the advertising in the early 1900s can be seen as sexist, offensive and racist towards women. On one side, women were shown as weaker and more submissive sex than men and they exist to please men. Many tobacco companies would use women in their ads to sell products, and the women would be totally nude. (DiSalvatore, 2010). On the other side, women are portrayed as obedient housewives, that are happy to be glued to the kitchen, doing home chores, as cooking, cleaning, washing, caring for her husband and children. Advertisements placed women in their home. One of the most enduring female characters in advertising at the time was Aunt Jemima, who invited families around the world to pancakes and homemade food. Aunt Jemima eventually became an icon. (Ad Age Encyclopedia, 2003). Through the 1930s, advertisements continued to portray women primarily as homemakers or objects of sexual desire.

The Great Depression and World War II have left deep scars on society, and military propaganda sought to expand the role of women in advertising. There was conflict between women’s actual role in society and the previous ways in which advertisers portrayed them. Women now are important for family, but for state too! Men are gone to the battlefield and there were women left to care for the home, family, society! Advertisements with women workers in factories and housewives prevailed. Many advertisers portrayed women in their newly expanded roles. For instance, Eureka showed three women in its vacuum cleaner ads—one in a military uniform, one in pants and another in typical housewifely garb. (Ad Age Encyclopedia, 2003).

However, in the post-war period, the woman again returns at home (to her chores!) and waits for her husband to come back from the battlefield. Advertising marketers once again are showing women at home, and some even suggest that the working woman is not a good mother!

In the 1950s, advertising was most sexist. The woman is tied to her home, and in the advertisements she is submissive to the endless will of the man. In addition to submission in advertisements, her naivety, stupidity, obedience, and ignorance are pointed out. This era in advertising is called an era of “Mad Men” when the ads implied that women were idiots who cared mostly about pleasing their men. (Harrison & Edwards, 2014). Some of the most egregious and sexist ads from that time were:

1950: The ad begins, "Most husbands, nowadays, have stopped beating their wives ... " (Heinz company),

1951: "Show her it's a man's world." (Van Heusen ties),

1952: Ad that promotes domestic violence and beating wife. (Chase & Sanborn Coffee),

1952: "Don't worry darling, you didn't burn the beer!" (Schlitz),

1953: Alcoa Aluminum's bottle caps open "without a knife blade, a bottle opener, or even a husband." (Alcoa Aluminum)

1953: It's so easy to use that even a woman with "no mechanical aptitude" can operate it. Is it always illegal to kill a woman? (Palmolive)

1956: "Budweiser has delighted more husbands than any other brew ever known." She married two men! (Budweiser)

1961: "The Chef does everything, but cook - that's what wives are for!" (Kenwood)

1963: The most important quality in coffee is how much it will please your man. (Acme Coffee)

1964: "Are you woman enough to buy a man's mustard?" (Mr. Mustard)

In some advertisements, the woman is portrayed as a worker, but in the role of secretary, telephone operator, clerk who uses office equipment and furniture. However, she is presented as a worker and a follower, not as a boss or leader.

In the 1960s and 1970s, during the period of the Sexual revolution, feminist movements and women's rights movements, the portrayal of women in advertising changed dramatically. The National Women's Organization, founded in 1966, seeks to remove the stereotypical portrayal of women in advertisements. The ads focus on independent and free women who, although married, have their own car, job, career, and participate in decision-making. One of the turning points in advertising's portrayal of women came with a landmark campaign from Revlon in 1973. The Charlie perfume campaign featured confident young women in tailored pantsuits pursuing traditionally male-oriented activities. (Ad Age Encyclopedia, 2003).

In commercials from the 1980s, the woman portrayed herself as a careerist and a "super-mother" by integrating her traditional and contemporary roles. She is sexy, but at the same time capable, independent, emancipated.

The 1990s brought dramatic changes in the display of women in advertising. The so-called "reversible sexism" was promoted, where men have a subordinate role in society and advertising. "Released", free, open-minded and intelligent women do not need men. Research showed that during this period there was a strong correlation between the models in the ads that were extremely weak and fragile and the eating disorders of young ordinary women and girls. Psychologists, nutritionists and activists pointed to the growing number of women suffering from bulimia and anorexia, due to the advertising.

By the turn of the 21st century, many key positions in advertising were occupied by women, enabling them to exert a major influence on ad campaigns. Some critics of the portrayal of women in advertising hoped this situation would give rise to more positive images of women.

3. Women in today's advertising

Men and women today lead highly complex lives with multiple societal roles. Men and women are parents, businesspeople, corporate board members, friends, siblings, volunteers, and more.

Today, in advertising, women are accepted in all roles, in all shapes, sizes and colors. She can be young and old, thin and curved, look sporty or leisurely, be intelligent, be a mother or a wife.

However, the problem of objectification, sexism and misogyny in advertising remains in the world. Although in hidden forms, the advertisements still show these prejudices about women and girls. For example, we can see women in ads for beauty products, clothes and shoes, but not for promoting new technology or innovation. These types of ads are typically only seen in male magazines. (DiSalvatore, 2010)

Girls, also still try to emulate the images of women in ads whether it is their hair, makeup, clothes, or even weight. These images lead to constant low self-esteem, eating disorders, and frustration. (Nigham and Jha 2007).

Under the pressure of women's movements, but also the public as a whole, a more positive portrayal of women in advertisements can be expected.

However, it must be borne in mind that the values that seem liberal and free-minded today may be problematic for future generations.

4. Women in Macedonian advertisements

In the Republic of Macedonia, according to the Annual Report of the Agency for Audio-Visual Media Services from 2016, in terms of advertising, the following can be concluded:

1) There is relative equality in the presence of men and women in advertisements, as the main characters, with the simultaneous noticeable presence of girls and boys in them (as independent carriers of the content or as a complement to the family atmosphere).

2) In advertisements, the most common age group are women aged 31-45, followed by those aged 18-30. Men are also usually 31-45 years old, followed by those in the age group of 46 years. This is due to the assumption that women / men at that age are potentially the biggest consumers of products and services.

3) Women often advertise products for women, but also other categories of products and services.

Women, regardless of whether they are the main or secondary subjects in the advertisements, in most cases are the bearers of traditional roles: housewives, wives and mothers.

In some advertisements they have neutral roles, and in some advertisements they

are presented as decoration. There are advertisements in which they attract attention with their physical appearance and are seductive.

The traditional representation of women is most often in the ads of food products, household appliances, cleaning set, as well as in products/toys for children. However, the Agency for Audiovisual Media Services noted the spread of misogyny and sexism on the programs of several radio stations.

4. Conclusions

The main objective of this paper was to examine female roles portrayed by advertising. More specifically, it was important to understand what messages about women have been given to society through advertising and whether these portrayals have been changed during the past decades.

The messages that advertising have given to society are that women are not considered equally to men. In addition, there are many stereotypes against women and their images are used in to give pleasure to men. Furthermore, prejudices which have roots in the patriarchal regime are still impregnated in social relations. Additionally, women still occupy positions that are inferior to men.

However, female portrayals have changed over the years. Today's greatest challenge is trying to get advertising companies to change their ways of promoting stereotypes. Research has shown that realistic portrayals can have positive results for advertisers and that certain types of imagery, including objectification of women, cause negative responses from consumers.

At the end, let's use the wise words of Nike advertisement of 1990s: "A woman is often measured by the things she cannot control. She is measured by the way her body curves or doesn't curve. By where she is flat or straight or round. She is measured by 36-24-36 and inches and ages and numbers. By all the outside things that don't ever add up to who she is on the inside. And so if a woman is to be measured, let her be measured by the things she can control, by who she is and who she is trying to become because as every woman knows, measurements are only statistics, and statistics lie."

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