

Assignment Four: Gender and Advertising in Culture

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Advertising is a major way for a company to reach customers and earn revenue for their business. Though advertisements are often the best way for a company or business to promote their products and support themselves, the way businesses often portray or display their ads is not equally representative of gender. Often advertisements and commercials are sexist or demeaning, with men and women being portrayed in different manners that are not indicative of the average consumer population, or population of the country.

In North American advertising, men and women are not represented equally. Advertisements are often stereotyped and sexist, depicting women in stereotypical gender roles or sexist poses or outfits. Men typically are not portrayed in the same manner as women, though there are plenty of businesses and corporations who use men as they would women in advertising. In many forms of American advertising, sex sells, and the sexier companies make their ads the more money they will earn from that product. This notion that sex sells is widespread across the country and is represented in multiple types of products including clothing and other apparel, perfume, and even food advertising.

In American advertising, women are often represented as sexual objects and not humans, nor are they representing the product that is being promoted. They are often featured in the commercial or advertisement to catch the attention of the viewers and consumers and be the main display, rather than have the featured product as the center of attention. Women in advertising are often dressed in very little clothing or very scandalous or provocative pieces, enticing passersby and viewers to look at the advertisement that features a small product that a company is promoting. Women are also featured with full hair and makeup, which is not realistic to most individuals and is meant to make them look more attractive and appealing to sell

whatever product they may be featured with. Women are often supposed to pose in proactive stances or move in a sexual manner to make the product more appealing to the consumer, though they are often promoting a product meant for their gender. Having women be displayed in advertising in this way creates a psychological awareness that other women can look like the models featured in the promotion and will purchase the product, thereby earning the company more money.

Men are often depicted similarly as women in American advertisements. Even with men being the focus of an advertisement or commercial, sex sells. Men are often featured in cologne or clothing ads without shirts, in swimsuits, or with little clothing covering them. The idea is that they are to show off their upper body and muscles to promote the company's products. As with women in advertising, the idea is that men will want to purchase the products these models are featured in because they want to look or act like them and believe the product being promoted will do that for them. Also, men in advertisement are shown with objects or items, such as luxury cars, homes, or even female models, which appeals to the buyer and may make them believe they can have what these men have through the product or service that is commercialized.

Though not all American advertisements depict men and women in a sexual, sexist, or stereotyped manner, it is very common for the population of the United States to see posters, commercials, catalogs, and magazines with these exaggerated models in them promoting goods and services. It has almost become second nature for Americans to expect to see advertising in this way, though it often harbors a lot of backlash and claims of sexism, discrimination, or harassment.

In other cultures, advertisements are different, and men and women are not always portrayed the same as they are in the United States. In Asian cultures, men and women are often

depicted differently in advertisements than those in North America. In Asian cultures, advertisements typically focus on the product or service rather than the person or model being featured in the ad. The people featured in their advertisements and commercials are not sexualized as heavily as they are in American advertising. The focus is on the product that companies are trying to sell to their consumers and the rest of the population.

Men and women in advertisements in Asian cultures are typically meant to be there to promote the product or service in the way that it is meant to be used. For example, clothing ads have them modeling as a standard model would, fast food commercials and ads have them either sitting with the product or eating it as one normally would and using the product how it is meant to be used or showing it off in its intended manner, such as with makeup advertising.

Advertisements in Asian cultures use their models and people in an effective way, rather than just for show, and promote the products in an organized, simple, and appropriate manner.

Some images for advertisements that are portrayed differently across cultures are that of food commercials. In the United States, one company that sexually objectifies women in their commercials is Hardee's. Hardee's tends to feature a statuesque woman in their commercials wearing nothing but a bikini and high heels while posing seductively against a truck or other object. The item that is being promoted is usually some type of sandwich and even the way the women bite into the sandwich can be considered provocative. Hardee's places the emphasis of their commercials on the women in them rather than the product they are trying to sell. Food commercials and advertisements in Asian cultures focus on the product itself, not the people included in it. Though the people play an important part of the advertisement to promote the product, they are not sexualized or scantily clad while acting in a provocative way. The people in

the commercials are used in an effective way to sell the product by eating it or using it the way it should be in a typical, normal fashion.

Another category of advertising with major differences across cultures is that of perfumes and colognes. American perfume and cologne advertisements often feature both men and women in the same commercial, though the product is only aimed at one of the sexes. The commercials and printed advertisements tend to have sexual undertones and meanings, while the models are seen in bathing suits and on boats or on the beach. If the models are not in bathing suits, they still have limited clothing items, as men will often be wearing shirts with the buttons undone to show their torso and chest, while women may be seen in dresses with plunging necklines or high slits up the leg. Also, the colors and lighting used in American perfume and cologne ads is usually monochromatic or has very few other colors featured. This sets the mood for the commercial and the perfume or cologne, enticing people to buy it. In Asian cultures, perfume and cologne ads are much simpler and to the point. They are sweeter and feature the bottle of cologne or perfume as the main subject with a model on the side posing in a sweet position. They are not as intense as American perfume ads and promote the products in a simple, yet effective, way with the models spraying the product onto themselves. In American perfume and cologne commercials, they are rarely seen using the product and are meant to be there to display how that product will make you feel or look, even though it is inaccurate to everyday life.

Some of the most common products seen in commercials and other forms of advertisements is clothing. In American advertising, particularly those aimed towards teenagers and young adults, it is common for the models in the ads to show off their bodies rather than the articles of clothing. Some brands, such as Abercrombie and Fitch, have shirtless male models featured in their advertisements, however, the models are only seen wearing jeans that are low

featured in their advertisements, however, the models are only seen wearing jeans that are low rise and cut off from the view of the camera, displaying only their abdomen and chest. The models for this company are not trying to sell the products, just show off their bodies. This type of advertising is meant to entice people to buy the product to make them think that they will look and feel just like the models featured in the ads. This type of commercializing is not present in every clothing company, but it is prevalent in certain brands and some continue to advertise in this manner. In clothing ads in Asian cultures, the focus is on the article of clothing and how it fits on the model. Rather than have the models show off their bodies, brands and companies display their product as to how it fits on someone's body and how it should be worn. Clothing ads in Asian cultures have their models posing, as well, though not in seductive ways as some American brands do. The models in Asian cultures appear fierce, strong, happy, enthusiastic, or intense, rather than sexy and fiery that is common in American ads.

The way men and women are portrayed in advertising and commercials can have consequences on the general population, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Some may develop body image issues after seeing men and women in commercials and posters and wishing that they looked like the models. It is unrealistic for the general population to expect to look like the models in advertisements through the products being endorsed and promoted. The way companies and brands portray their products may cause people to unrealistically expect the same results that the models are promoting. Issues regarding one's self esteem or body image may develop among younger viewers, especially through clothing advertisements, such as those of Abercrombie and Fitch. Advertisements and commercials should be designed in such a way to make the consumer feel good about themselves and confident in their decision to purchase the product, and they should not be produced in a way to induce issues or concerns about the self or

product, and they should not be produced in a way to induce issues or concerns about the self or in ways that make it appear as if the product will give you everything you want that was also presented in the promotional piece.

The way advertising and commercialism affect culture starts with the culture itself. Each culture and country have their own views and ways of marketing. The way a population reacts to commercials and advertisements depends on where they are in the world, as well as their values and beliefs regarding the opposing sexes. There are a lot of characteristics, traits, and aspects of a population that go into forming a culture, and advertising and the way people see themselves and others is one of many. Though brands and companies use their culture to their advantage for pushing sales and promoting products, not every brand represents their culture in an accurate way. There are always going to be differences in the way different cultures promote their products and services, though some have made more progressive moves towards positive representation and others need to work on moving towards a more positive and beneficial portrayal of their products.

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Appendix



