

Sex in advertising assignment

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Firebombed and Fitch will be investigated to see how their designers negotiate ethical issues within an industry. Sex in advertising is most commonly used in image-based products such as alcohol, cigars, fragrance, cosmetics and fashion (Koran, 2006, p. 2). Koran also maintains that the main target audiences for sex in advertising are twelve to seventeen year olds because of their increasing disposable incomes and their curiosity towards sex. This target audience raises concerns of whether it is ethical to be associating sex with a product that young people will see and potentially buy.

A common idea is that sex in advertising does catch the viewer's attention but often brand recognition is sacrificed (Blair, Stephenson, Hill, and Green, 2006, p. 109). Severe, Belch and Belch (1990, p. 14-22) came out a study, which found sex in advertising detracted the viewers processing of the message and ability to remember the brand. However, Deflating (2006) disagrees with this study. He believes sex does sell as our fundamental instincts take over when we are presented with sex in advertising.

From this one can assume, according to Deflating, there are no ethical implications with signers using sex in advertising, as it is a natural aspect of life and therefore expected rather than shocking. In contrast to Defaulter's claims Cyberpunks (2000) points out that " The flaw in the sex sells theory is that sex does not sell. Sexiness sells. " (p. 14). With regard to the Victorians Secret advertisement (see fig. 1) it is clear that the idea of being sexy can sell. The model, although naked, is tastefully covered. The designer Of this advert has considered the ethical implications of the consumers.

This advertisement has sex appeal but with the coverage of the model the brand name can still be recognized and remarkable. The viewer is not bombarded with explicit sexual material therefore the designer has successfully negotiated the ethics of sex in advertising in accordance of what consumers feel is ethical. Consumer response is vital when it comes to ethical implications however one must also look into the designers mind whilst they are creating advertisements of a sexual nature. Bird and Waters (1989, p. 75) conducted an experiment to determine whether or not designers are considering the ethical implications of their work.

They came up with a classification, moral muteness, which summarizes the designers who did not present moral once in their work. Moral muteness meant that ethics were rarely discussed in the design process. The fact that there is a classification tells us there are a high number of designers who are not thinking about the ethical implications of their work. Branding expert Lee Newman expresses his opinion on why this might be when discussing if he would work with an unethical client, "If I was financially secure, and if I felt strongly about it, no, I wouldn't take the client. If I wasn't busy and needed the money, I would think about it... This reason" (Airy, 2007). It is clear that finance is a crucial element to whether or not ethical implications are negotiated. With this theory in mind the essay will now see if corporate companies within industry are considering ethical implications. Victorians Secret is one of America's biggest lingerie brands in the fashion industry and actively uses sex in their advertising successfully. As a result of their use of sex in advertising within two years Victorians Secret went from being ranked twenty sixth to ninth amongst the "most recognizable brands" (Richter,

2003, p. 90). Ethical implications for various Victorians Secret advertisements have not always been thought about as evidence shows that 'The Wall Street Journal' have turned down their adverts for being too sexually orientated (Richter, 2003, p. 194). However, elements of ethical implications are being considered by designer Victor Angled in the 2012 Victorians Secret CRY campaign (see fig. 2). Although the advertisements imply nudity the models are covered by the CRY code thus complying with the ethical concerns of many consumers who disagree with nudity being shown in public.

Angled gives the viewer an opportunity to reveal what is under the CRY code by scanning it, making it so the viewer controls how much or little of the advert they want to see. This is a successful negotiation of ethical implications as power is given to the consumer to make their own choices. In comparison to Victorians Secret designer Victor Angled, the Calvin Klein designers in the fragrance industry are not so sympathetic to the ethical implications of their advertisements. As Bird and Waters (1989) would describe, the Calvin Klein designers suffer from moral muteness.

Calvin Kelvin's erotic advertisements are producing over five billion dollars of retail sales annually, once again proving that sex does sell (Richter, 2003, p. 33). Blair et al. (2006, p. 114) make a valid point that it is the advertising agencies that should take responsibility and control ethics involved with sex in advertising. The major concern from this statement is that all of Calvin Kelvin's advertising is done through an internal company called CRY Advertising, meaning that the company controls the advertising not an external agency (James, 2009).

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Thus, there is no barrier that assures ethical implications are being adhered to. This is clearly evident in their fragrance advertisement (see fig. 3). The woman in the advertisement is naked and has been shot in a suggestive position. It is no wonder that Calvin Klein has been credited by feminists and the Women Against Pornography' as objectifying and exploiting women (Richter, 2003; Richter and Lambdas, 2003). Designers here seem to be following Scott and Batter's (2003, p. 5) theory that people can cope with this style of advertising if they are aware that most images are digitally enhanced. Chine et al. 2004) disagrees with this point and questions whether it is " ethical to play off of people's insecurities to sell a product". They also go on to say that those who are more likely to buy the products are insecure and use the product as a confidence boost to appear sexier. The evidence here suggests that Calvin Klein designers are not negotiating with the issue of ethical implications; instead they are manipulating their consumers for their own financial gain. Firebombed and Fitch is another brand that heavily utilizes sex in advertising and do not always consider the ethical implications of their work.

The company changed from selling fishing gear to sexy apparel in the sass's successfully due to their provocative marketing campaigns (Richter, 2003, p. 31 Perhaps one Of their only campaigns that show the designers' ethical incinerations is the Quarterly' (see fig. 4), which is a three hundred page promotional magazine that features nude or semi-nude models (Richter, 2003, p. 231). The publication is restricted to persons over the age of eighteen showing that the designers have limited the audience of the

magazine to people who are of an age where they can choose what they read.

This is a clever tactic for the designers as they have negotiated the issue of ethical implications in this instance by offering a choice, much like the Victorians Secret campaign. However, Firebombed and Fitch have many public advertisements that are controversial (see fig.). The billboard features a man of a muscular build pulling his jeans down. His head is cropped out, clearly objectifying the man as an ideal. Obviously ethical implications have not been thought about here as this billboard is exposed to the public, including children and young teenagers.

The billboard impacts the societal views of youth as they see a muscular man and aspire to be him or be with him (Johan, 2001 p. 324). Koran (2006) describes the affects of this sort of advertising saying that it can stunt the growth of young men as they begin lifting weights too early in life in an attempt to be as muscular as the models they see. One could conclude that Firebombed and Fitch do negotiate the ethical implications of their work in instances but it is rarely evident in most campaigns.

After examining the work of various designers who use sex in advertising it is clear that the negotiation of ethical issues is not deemed essential in most advertisements. Although some designers such as Victor Angled have shown that ethical implications are being considered, the works of Calvin Klein and Firebombed and Fitch outweigh this with their objectification of men and women. In summary it is clear that sex does sell to consumers so it s

expected that this style of advertising will continue to be used and regularly seen by the public.