

# Why women and girls must fight the addictive power of advertising essay

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The reason why I picked *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising* is because it looked very interesting compared to the other two books I had also chosen. One book had to deal with TV living and the other book had to deal with detecting lies and deceit but when I ran across a book that was mainly focused on women and advertising, I was completely for it. I thought out of all the books that I have chosen I would be more interested in how the author, Jean Kilbourne approached different aspects of women and advertising. I also chose this book, because I felt like I was not influenced by advertisements but then after reading a few chapters of the book, I realized that advertising affects a lot of people and people do things in life because of what they see on television, billboards, movies, etc. I also thought it was interesting to learn how advertising truly affects women when it comes to cars, food, clothing, etc. It's just interesting to see the different advertisements that Jean Kilbourne presents throughout the book and see the different meanings to the advertisements and see why people react the way that they do to the different ads.

Jean Kilbourne has a lot of different publications. One of her publications is a book called *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. Besides publishing books, Jean Kilbourne also has a series of films and videos. Her first film, *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women* and the remakes *Still Killing Us Softly* and *Killing Us Softly 3* are amongst some of the most popular educational films of all times.

Some of her other videos include: Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies and Alcohol, Slim Hopes: Advertising and the Obsession with Thinness and Pack of Lies: The Advertising of Tobacco. She has also been the host of several videos and has also lectured to over 1, 000 colleges and universities. When it comes to research, Jean Kilbourne had done her fair share. She has done research on how advertising affects women and girls when it comes to alcohol, sex, food, cars, clothing, tobacco, violence, and rebellion. One example would be the completion of the book, Deadly Persuasion and another example would be the video Killing Us Softly: Advertising's Image of Women and also the video, Spin the Bottle: Sex, Lies and Alcohol. These two videos show substantial information about all the different research that she has done to find out the answers to the questions. Jean Kilbourne's book relates to Persuasion in many ways. Persuasion is a form of social influence that occurs between people and affects behavior.

This book relates to Persuasion because throughout the book, Kilbourne talks about how advertisements affect women and girls even though they might not think it does. Kilbourne reveals throughout the book, that " advertising encourages us not only to objectify each other but to also feel that our most significant relationships are with the products that we buy (27). " Kilbourne believes that advertisements corrupt relationships and then offers us products that we long for and need.

Part II Summary of the book Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight The Addictive Power of Advertising is a book about women and advertising. Throughout this book, Jane Kilbourne reveals how deeply

advertisers insinuate themselves into our daily lives. What Jean Kilbourne basically keeps us aware of throughout this book is that advertisers do far more than influence our taste; Advertisers manipulate our desires so that the products that we purchase will become our closest friends. In the introduction, Kilbourne talks about her life as a young child and the many different things she has experienced in life.

After seeing an ad that changed her life in 1968, she realized that advertisements demeaned women and it was then that she realized that she wanted to focus on advertising and women. One of the main points throughout the book that Kilbourne makes clear is that advertising does influence people and their actions and this is one of the reasons why television and magazines, primarily any time of media, engage in many different forms of competition to convince different organizations to place their advertisements on different publications so that consumers can see what is out there and maybe even buy it if the ad is portraying what needs to be sold. Jean Kilbourne also throughout her book talks about how the different images on the ads really do not relate to what is being advertised. Many of the different ads have these catchy phrases and statements written somewhere on the ad that has nothing to do with the ad at all. She went on to say that a shoe ad might show a pair of shoes on a person but will actually make the consumer think that the focus of the ad is on the relationship of the child and not the pair of Timberland boots. Or, an ad that had "Life's precious gifts" on it, the reader might think that life's precious gift is a warming relationship with someone else because that is what the ad is

portraying. But if the reader looks at the bottom print, of the page, they realize that the ad has to deal with Silver Crystal knick-knacks (76). The bottom line that she is saying is that ads have promised us to a better relationship with a product and that if we buy a certain product, the consumer will be loved but to an extent, things have changed and the slogan went to, " buy this and it will love you(81).

" Another thing she also wrote about is advertising and food. She said that women have always been closely linked to food and that now food has become intertwined with love. Food has been advertised as a way for men and women to demonstrate their love and to insure its requital.

What she is saying is that people place relationships on food. She feels that people think that a way to win a person's heart is with what you make in the kitchen. Also, Kilbourne noticed that a lot of the ads have a lot more women than men and they women in these ads are featured as feeding themselves and not the man, like most of the male ads feature. She said that these ads feature a lot more women than men because after a psychological research was done, the results came out that women use food to deal with their loneliness and disappointment and also in a way to connect.

When things do not go a certain way, it is assumed that women eat the pain away. Besides dealing with food, Kilbourne also dealt with religion and advertising. What she had to say with this is now advertisements are bringing religion into their ads and displaying that products will now offer sin without consequence.

The different ads now are trying to not let the consumers feel guilty about purchasing an item that they know they shouldn't purchase, eating food that they shouldn't it or knowing that something is wrong but doing it anyways because the people in the advertisements are doing it and nothing is wrong with them. Jean Kilbourne's *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight The Addictive Power of Advertising* is a book that focuses on women and advertising. This book lets the readers know that advertising does have an affect on people and people act the way that they do because of what the see in the media. Advertising can have very powerful positive and negative affects on women and that is why women try to fit in the way that they do. Since the advertisements portray women as " perfect," women want to be perfect, so they do negative things in order to look a certain way which can have harmful affects on their bodies. Part III Response to the Book I thought that *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight The Addictive Power of Advertising* was a very interesting book. In the beginning, I really was not feeling the idea of reading a book dealing with persuasion at all because I thought it would be a waste of time, but after reading the introduction, I was totally hooked on the book.

*Deadly Persuasion* is a powerful book, and I will never look at advertisements in the same way again. This is a very well-thought out, well-supported account of how advertisers sell products by attracting the socially-constructed insecurities of girls and women, as well as the habits and patterns of addicts. She also clearly expresses her theory that while she doesn't think that ads turn people into addicts or completely shape society,

they do have an affect on how we see the world and on how addicts can maintain a state of denial. This book also changed the way that I look at myself and the different things around me. After thinking about certain things, I realized that I look at ads to guide me in what direction I want to go. If I see that some new kind of makeup is out there and it looks good, then I go out and buy it.

If I see some new kind of fragrance that I like, I usually try the sample, then go to the store and buy it. Jean Kilbourne throughout her book shows different ads which portray different things. The part of the book I liked was when she was talking about how people put relationship on their products. An example would be a Charmin ad that said " Bath tissue is like a marriage," and when she read this ad to her friend, her friend was like " I thought what one wants most in bath tissue is to be able to flush it away.

" The ad at the bottom of the page though tells us that " the longer it lasts, the better it is (76). " To an extent this is true but now-a-days; a lot of marriages are not lasting and are ending up in divorce. Another topic that I really liked about this book was when Jean Kilbourne was talking about advertising and violence especially the part when she talks about how men are encouraged to not take no as an answer. " Ad after ad implies that girls and women don't really mean " no" when they say it, that women are only teasing when they resist men's advances (273). " I would think that different ads like these make it seem like women don't really know what they want and just say things and that when they do say no, they don't really mean it.

Overall, *Deadly Persuasion* is a wonderful book that should be recommended in communications classes dealing with advertising.

*Deadly Persuasion* is well-written, well-researched and although some parts are redundant, it's a great book that clearly gets the point across that advertising truly does influence people. Part IV Analysis *Deadly Persuasion* has a lot to do with persuasion. When it comes to advertisements, advertising is a form of persuasion because through advertisements, people are being persuaded to buy something, do something and sometimes even become something that they might see on an ad. From the click of a channel to the glance at a billboard, people are always going to be affected by advertisements.

Borchers seems to believe that advertising is ubiquitous which means it is all around us. Advertising is everywhere we look and we can't escape advertising if we tried to. In *Deadly Persuasion*, the readers can somewhat get a sense that advertising is ubiquitous because from all the different ads that Jean Kilbourne has picked out to talk about in her book. Jean Kilbourne started looking at ads back in 1968 and ads to a point have changed but they still portray the same things. Kilbourne found different advertisements dealing with rebellion, violence, food, religion, etc. Borchers also seems to believe that advertising is profane, which basically is saying that advertising sells good and services to us for our use in this world. Throughout this book, consumers will see different ads of things that producers are trying to sell. The way that they present the different kinds of ads is unique.



Most of the ads throughout this book are not just simple ads where it has a picture telling the reader to do this. The ads are more detailed and sometimes people might not be able to even tell what the ad is for. People might not even know at first glance what the ad is trying to sell until they look at it for a decent amount of time. An example of this would be an ad that features an earnest looking young woman, dressed in denim, with the copy " I get really angry when I hear about all the selfish people who are destroying our environment. Polluting the beaches.

Burying toxic wastes. Causing acid rain. Someday I want to travel and see the world. I only hope it isn't screwed up by then (297). As a reader, you probably would think that this ad is probably selling something about the environment, but in actuality, the ad is selling gold bracelets. Another example of this would be an ad that has a swimsuit laid out in the middle of the page. At the top of the page it says " It's not doing you any good tucked away in your bottom drawer (126). " Most people would think that the ad is for a certain brand of swimsuit, but the ad is actually for Special K cereal.

And next to the Special K box in small print says " Great taste never looked so good. Great toasted taste. No calories. And it's fat free. Maybe that's just what your diet and exercise plan needs (126).

" Deadly Persuasion also has a lot to do with relationship marketing. From what Borchers said in Chapter 13, Relationship Marketing is used in media and technology to communicate on a one-on-one basis with different consumers. Many of the ads that are out there are trying to affect a person

on a one-to-one basis and if these ads affect people the way that they want it to, then they feel they have accomplished something. Jean Kilbourne wrote about how Kraft announced a plan to target advertising messages so that two household watching the same channel could see different Kraft spots because the different televisions in the same house could have different spots, which basically means commercials.

The Kraft executive said that it's a "one-on-one communications approach" and that "Relationship marketing is what it's all about (84)." People are now being encouraged to feel that the products that they buy they should have a relationship with them and to feel passionate for the product than their partners. It is basically about loving something without getting your heart broken and many people do not like getting their heart broken because love is risky, painful and love without vulnerability is impossible. Advertisers are trying to get their consumers to develop relationships with all the different products to make them happy. Advertisers think that sex sells, so they get all the pretty women and men on the ads, dressed half naked, modeling something and if they feel that the readers really buy their products they are happy. Advertisers think as long as a pretty face is selling something and it looks good up against their skin and people buy it, it's a success. Overall, I really enjoyed this book.

In the beginning I really didn't have any interest in reading this book but if I came across this book at the bookstore, after looking at the cover, reading the back and inside of the book, I probably would have bought it because it does look interesting and I really wanted to see Jean Kilbourne's view on how

she feel advertising affects girls and women. It was interesting to see her view on things and actually take into consideration of what she was saying because now after reading this book, I look at advertisements a little differently and now when I see something I want from an ad, I think about if I really need and also think about how purchasing this product is really going to affect me because more than likely, I am attracted to the ad, not for the item but for what the ad portrays.