Advertising 10618

Business, Marketing

Advertising promotes more than mere products in our popular culture. Because

images used in advertising are often idealized, they eventually set the standard

which we in turn feel we must live up to. Advertisements serve to show us what

the ideal image is, and further tell us how to obtain it. Advertisers

essentially have the power to promote positive images or negative images.

Unfortunately, most of the roles portrayed by women tend to fit the latter

description. The irony lies therein since it is these negative images which have

been most successful in selling products. It is easy to understand the appeal

which these ads hold for men, as they place women in an inferior role; one

characterized by helplessness, fragility and vulnerability. Certainly one can

not deny that visual images serve to create the ideal female beauty within the

material realm of consumer culture. The problem is that if one strays from this

ideal, there's the risk of not being accepted by men. Advertisers, by setting

ideals, not only sell their products, but in fact reaffirm traditional gender

roles in mainstream America. Women portrayed in sexual ads are depicted as

objects and commodities, to be consumed by men for visual pleasure and by women

for self-definition. Any depiction of a woman in scant clothing ultimately makes

her look vulnerable and powerless, especially when placed next to a physically

stronger man. Studies show that advertisements will concentrate primarily on a

woman's body parts rather than her facial expressions. Also, it was proven that

over 50% of commercials portraying women contained at least one camera shot

focusing on her chest. Men enjoy these images, and sadly, women tend to try to

embody them, regardless of the extent to which they degrade themselves. Perhaps

one of the most recent, successful, and controversial ad campaigns of the

nineties is that of Calvin Klein. Ironically, in contrast to the normal,

objectifying advertisements that deface women altogether, Klein focuses on his

model's expressions. However, these expressions are similar to those of a scared

child. The naked female model in turn looks even more vulnerable than when she

was faceless. Here, in this ad Kate Moss is depicted as an innocent scared

child. Her fingers touch her lips as if she is not permitted to speak, while her

eyes look as if they are bruised. Moss' breast is exposed in this image, but

instead of appearing voluptuous, Moss appears to be almost prepubescent. She

stares vacantly and helplessly into the camera. Again, women see these images as

attractive to men and subsequently feel the need to embody them. Unfortunately,

the body of Kate Moss is an unrealistic and unattainable ideal for most women.

This distorted " ideal body image" is one of the leading causes for the

recent rise of anorexia in young girls. The " waif" woman image is

causing extreme low self-esteem for women in the nineties. The advertisement

proves effective because normal women can never, and will never look like Kate

Moss. All the hollow attempts will only bring more attention to these marketing

strategies, and ultimately more business for Calvin Klein. It is difficult to

pinpoint the cause for Klein's overwhelming success despite the nature of his

advertisements. Before Calvin Klein's waif image developed, it was thought that

concentration on a woman's voluptuous physical features was what intrigued men.

But this idea of Moss as a helpless child, with no real feminine curves at all,

reiterates the argument that the male attraction to certain ads lies in the

sexual power it gives them. Women please men in their nudity, their purity, and

their body size. Women can never be happy with themselves until their

representation in advertising become more reflective of reality. But if the ads

become more realistic, then the advertisements aren't able to sell their

self-help images. Essentially the world of morals and advertising, if the two

can logically coexist, form a constant vicious cycle.