

Third wave feminism and advertising assignment

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In this essay, I intend to analyse the language and images of two magazine advertisements that use a woman to sell a product. With a view of third-wave feminism and micro politics, I will ascertain if there is a politic present in the delivery of the message. Third wave feminists strive to raise consciousness about gender equality within society, especially the workplace. They also rebel against the generalised image perceived by society of how a woman should be, namely: feminine, submissive, weak, passive, intuitive and emotional.

This is contrasting to what men are generally perceived to be, namely: masculine, dominant, strong, aggressive, intelligent, rational and active. Feminists also rival the ideas of what woman should be interested in (Macdonald 2006). Feminists today criticise the previous generation of feminists, namely the second wave, of not fulfilling their goals. Third wave feminists have also been criticised because they do not have a common aim very different to that of the second wave feminists, some have called third wave feminism 'second wave, part two. (Burr 2007). Magazine advertisements like all other forms of printed media reach millions of people daily and are considered to be very successful. They have a longer life, i. e. they can be kept for an undecided amount of time, because they are more tangible than other forms of advertising – like outdoor, television and radio advertising. They can also be used as reference in future conversations (Kang 1997). The advertisements I chose, advertise products that are bought and used by both women and men. They were taken from Glamour magazine (April 2007).

Glamour is a women's lifestyle magazine focusing on fashion, beauty and romance but also has articles on career and life. The target market for the magazine is young working women aged between 18 and 30. "Women's Magazines Send Us a Strange, Confusing Message" Sandra Porteous from The Daily News once stated. Although it was intended for the variety of contradicting articles in women's magazines, it could also be applicable to the advertisements placed in these magazines. Paging through a magazine targeted at women, one could notice the contradicting perceptions of idyllic women that are being communicated by advertisers. A study done by Rob Roberts, also from The Daily News, shows that advertisements for the same products are portrayed differently, according to the target audience, in other words, whether male or female. From an advertising point of view, this seems obvious, but this might be what Third wave feminists are opposing. The first advertisement (Image 1) I chose to analyse is for the men and women fashion label, 'Guess'. The model is wearing a leopard print scarf and gloves, gold jewellery and belt, as well as a cropped halter neck denim corset and jeans.

The clothing and accessories are all presumably Guess products as no other products are presented. She is lying on a zebra print background, her pose is provocative, her make up is heavily done and her facial expression is seductive. The different elements chosen could portray value, exotic, luxury and wealth. The model herself portrays an idyllic lifestyle that one might have if one uses the product. This appeals to women who desire this particular lifestyle and personal image. Third wave feminism challenges this ideal, as it is a definition of femininity.

The angle that the photographer chose to take the photograph could suggest the submissiveness that is generally associated with females.

Stereotypically, women are the weaker sex and are rarely seen in advertisements portraying dominant roles. This advertisement could also tell the reader that in order to be as successful as the model, one needs to be less dominant, more feminine. Because this advertisement was placed in a women's magazine, one can safely assume that the product advertised is women's clothing.

The way the image is cropped shows the viewer more of the model than of the actual clothing that she is wearing, this also reveals that the advertiser is selling a lifestyle, rather than a piece of clothing. The Guess label is known for their sexually driven advertising campaigns, and when looking at campaigns they have previously launched, it is evident they are indeed selling the type of lifestyle that this particular advertisement is portraying. Thus, because you wear Guess clothing, you are living the Guess lifestyle. The second advertisement (Image 2) I chose is for DKNY's new fragrance, 'Red Delicious'.

The advertisement displays two models, one male and one female. They are sitting on a motorcycle with a New York cityscape in the background. The male model is wearing a blue torn jean and a grey t-shirt. He is facing the female model with his eyes closed and his right hand is behind her placed on her right leg. The female model is wearing a red dress; she is looking seductively at the reader with her left hand on the male model's leg and she is holding a red apple in her right hand. The elements used in this advertisement depict a variety of different meanings.

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The female model's attire suggests that she is wearing the fragrance because the red links with the name of the fragrance, 'Red Delicious'. It also allows her to become the centre of the reader's attention as red is an assertive colour that draws attention. This apposes the male model's attire, which shows him as submissive and also suggests that he is not wearing the fragrance. The apple she is holding could play on the idea of the biblical story of Adam and Eve, where Eve seduces Adam to eat from the forbidden tree. This play of ideas could suggest that in order to get attention from a male, a woman should wear the fragrance.

It could also suggest that one could seduce someone when wearing this fragrance. The text underneath the name reads: " a new temptation in fragrances. for women. for men. " This says that both women and men can use the fragrance, but an underlying meaning could be that the fragrance is for women to wear for men, sending a message of women being submissive to men. The models are sitting on a motorcycle and the female's pose reminds one of a vintage ' pin-up girl' poster. These posters portrayed women as sex symbols and this advertisement sends a message that if one was to wear this particular fragrance, one will become an object of desire.

Although this is a factor that feminists challenge, the woman in this advertisement is not portrayed as being submissive, but confident and dominant, which is a contradiction to what is generally perceived by society. In both the advertisements, the female models are projected as sexual symbols. This makes the products being advertised more desirable.

Advertisers, designers and photographers choose the images they use to carry the message that they want the final product to communicate by

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researching their target market. This perhaps reveals that the female society has a need to be desirable for their male counterparts.

The messages are also contradicting within the society we live in but in a certain degree a move forward from what use to be the general perception of women as housewives, but at the same time it showcases what third wave feminist are challenging. Bibliography: Enns, C. Z. , 2004. Feminist theories and feminist psychotherapies ??? origins, themes and diversity. New York: The Haworth Press. Bryson, V. , 2003. Feminist political theory ??? an introduction. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. McLaughlin, J. 2003. Feminist social and political theory ??? contemporary debates and dialogues. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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2008] Glamour Magazine, April 2007. Images available: Image 1: 2007 Guess Print Advertisement http://alkaspace.com/is.php?i=104129&img=Image_1.jpg Image 2: 2007 DKNY Red Delicious Perfume Print Advertisement http://alkaspace.com/is.php?i=104130&img=Image_2.jpg