

Television commercials and how they perpetuate gender stereotypes



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INTRODUCTION: Television commercials shape and are shaped by the gender definitions of our society. Many critics argue “ that advertising is a bellwether of cultural trends, a mirror of social values, and a powerful, usually malevolent force that shapes those values”(Manca and Manca, 1994) These commercials depict anything from realistic family gatherings to sex driven fantasies.

Which commercials are shown when, appears to depend on the audience in which the programming is targeted. Do commercials promote and depict gender stereotypes? If so, does the intended audience of the programming influence the types of commercials shown? Does some programming show commercials disproportionately more stereotypical than in other programming? If that is the case then I would like to know if this discrepancy depends on if the programming is target for male versus females. These are some of the questions I hope to address in this project. I will employ the radical feminist perspective in analyzing my findings to reveal if this society’s patriarchal standards are at the bare root of this dilemma. This society being a patriarchy utilizes gender stereotypes to oppress women. Women are defined by patriarchal standards as they are defined by a male standards and not their own, this in effect oppresses them and gives them inferior standing in relation to men.

These patriarchal standards impose gender stereotypes keeping women in a subordinate position. I will also utilize social learning theory in examining this issue. Social learning theory explains how people learn behavior by observing others behavior. It can be argued that people learn behavior from the behavior portrayed in media such as movies and television.

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Could commercials as a marketing media also influence behavior? As mentioned above, critics state that advertising mirrors social values and shapes them. In a study done by Robert A. Bartsch he states that “ research has indicated that gender representation in media can affect people’s attitudes and behaviors” (Bartsch, 2000). Then it can be assumed that television advertising mirrors society’s gender stereotypes as well as shapes them. Does advertising, in this case television commercials, help perpetuate these stereotypes influenced by the patriarchy of society? Commercial ads are typically gendered in the sense that companies advertise to who they believe that will best maximize their profits in terms of the programming’s target audience.

For instance a television programming most likely to have a large a male audience, one will find that they will more likely see commercials for beer and automobiles. Female oriented programs are more likely to show commercials featuring beauty products, feminine products, and house cleaning products. Do these gender focused commercials influence and promote gender stereotypes? In the article Men’s Men and Women’s Women: How TV Commercials portray Gender to Different Audiences, writer Robert Kemper asks this question as well. “ Don’t such gendered ads encourage conventional, exploitative, gender images? That is don’t advertisers pander to traditional gender fantasies and stereotypes of the audience in order to sell products? ” (Kemper, 1992) I predict that my findings will confirm that television commercials perpetuate gender stereotypes and that the degree of stereotyping varies and depends on the program’s targeted audience in terms of gender.

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I expect to find that the programming in which has the greatest number of offending commercials will be the one that's target is a primarily male audience. I believe that it will be in programming directed towards males that one will most likely see the commercials that stereotype gender roles.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The research I conducted which was set out by my research question of whether or not television commercials perpetuated the gender stereotypes and my hypothesis that my findings would confirm that gender stereotyping is perpetuated by these commercials. I expected to also find that I would see more of the stereotyping done in commercials with programming aimed at a male audience.

The results of my study found my hypotheses to be affirmative. This society's patriarchal standards that promote male domination are much highlighted even in television commercials. This agrees with the radical feminist perspective that believes that patriarchy is a system of power that supports male dominance which is used to oppress women. I found this very much to be the case in the commercials during the male oriented programming.

From the perspective of social learning theory it can be assumed that people could learn behaviors from such mediums as commercials. Studies have shown that film and video games are correlated with violence so it can be also assumed that television commercials can cause a bit of influence of how we see gender roles. It seems like a very circular trend in that if it is society's standards that these commercials mirror and yet these images can also shape society's values, then who or what is the primary culprit? It can be <https://assignbuster.com/television-commercials-and-how-they-perpetuate-gender-stereotypes/>

argued that these commercials just reflect how society is and on the other hand one can argue that these commercials are the ones promoting these values into society. I feel that the advertisers must change this in order for there to be change. Since the audiences ranges from the very young to the elderly, with the former being the most impressionable as they learn behaviors from what they see. Advertisers should be more cautious of this, but will they? According to Kemper” entire industries (i.

e. fashion and automotive) predicate on the assumption that males and females will act in accordance to their stereotypes. Therefore commercials aimed at women act to reinforce patriarchy and to co-opt any reactionary ideology into it. Commercials aimed at males need to only reinforce masculinity under patriarchy” (Kemper, 1992).

If this is correct then this ties into the socialist feminist perspective that believes it the role of capitalism that oppresses women. These industries feel they need to maximize profits by influencing people through advertising and to do this they must play into the gender stereotypes so they can effectively influence buying behavior. This in turns oppresses women because the advertising only reinforces gender roles as females being subordinate to men and men being the dominant sex. This then leads me to the conclusion that in order to influence change people should not buy from companies that utilize stereotypes in their advertising.

Hopefully by doing that these companies won't profit of perpetuating stereotypes and depict less of that so that it can shape society's values and hopefully mirror a change in society as well. Works Cited Kemper, Robert

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