

Sociology of consumption



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The main theme of the Twentieth Century's advertising is gender role. Human body and sexuality is used in advertising to sell all kind of products. Gender role is an ideology that is used as a concept in advertising to attract the attention from audience because it gives clear direction to people. The idea that thin is everywhere, and is hardly escapable from the advertising industry. We live in a world of stick thin models and emaciated celebrities. Magazines cover advertise " Best and worst bodies" and " Too thin for TV". Weekly tabloids feature stories on who has lost the most weight and who needs to cover up.

Television ads promote the greatness of the diet pills; energy drinks that can speed up your metabolism, and newest Master Cleanser diet that will help you lose ten pounds in two days. And although the messages are damaging and often untrue, women everywhere are suffering the consequences of constant exposure to overly thin models and movie stars. In Susan Bordo's essay Hunger as ideology, she illustrates how advertisements, both modern and dated, use the transformation of women into objects of sexual desire to appeal to their target audience.

She explains the most effective methods of transformation include the use of proactive images or situations, including the clothing and body positions of the models in the advertisement. Bordo argues that gender ideology is reflected in food advertisements. She begins her essay with an evaluation of the role that cultural standards about appetite size play on food advertisements. She notes a difference in the way advertisements depict men's and women's respective controls of their appetites. Bordo believes

that women are portrayed as needing to have control over themselves; men, on the other hand are encouraged to show control over others.

Bordo unmasks the present messages by the media and society and the expectations and pressures on females during the Victorian age. She examines society's ways of forcing the idea of the "ideal women" or "perfect female" through commercials, advertising, fashion and other forms of media on to individuals. The example given about the two little French girls drooling over the thin mother and her eating not so much habits and fibre-thin secret portrays what is being taught and passed on as a way of tradition rather than parenting choice or accident.

Bordo argues that not all the advertisement she has studied display contemporary ideas about men and women. She claims that it is considered wrong for women to surrender to their temptations and eat rich foods, can also be verified with examples from the current media. According to Bordo, prohibitions against female indulgence came from Victorian conduct manuals which warned women of the dangers of indulgent and over-stimulating eating and advised how to consume in a feminine way. Thus women were to avoid the temptation of rich foods like desserts and chocolates in order to appear lady-like.

This belief still applies today, existing alongside a societal ideal that encourages women to remain thin and fit. There are many examples that support Susan Bordo's ideology of hunger. Special K has many ad campaigns that mention their nine different cereal flavors to choose from. There is one particular commercial that shows a woman eating their cereal so she could

get into a bikini by summer (Refer to appendix A). But cereal is not the only product they offer to us as magic on fat food. They set up an adversarial relationship between a woman and her body than by reducing it to three small pieces of fabric and a bow.

It gets even better when you consider that the woman in advertisement already has a bikini worthy body. So if she can't even wear a bikini with confidence then how can the rest of us even dream of attempting it? These ladies are conventionally attractive and already thin but still need to diet to keep their shape or get even smaller. It is evident through this commercial that this belief of "ideal women" that is thin and fit still exists. However, this belief of "ideal women" and today's stereotypical view of beauty was challenged by the dove campaign that was launched in 2004.

Dove launched the very successful Campaign for Real Beauty which featured real women, not models, advertising Dove's firming cream. Dove's Real Beauty campaign challenged society and the media to re-define beauty and in so doing, raise the self-esteem of women worldwide. The advertisements focus on promoting real, natural beauty, in an effort to offset the unrealistically thin and unhealthy archetypal images associated with modeling. Dove encouraged the viewer to let go of society's narrow fantastical idea of beauty, and embrace beautiful reality.

The commercials direct the audience that it's time that all women felt beautiful in their own skin. This feeling is articulated quite strongly through their slogan "real women have curves". By showing a wider range of skin types and body shapes, Dove's advertising offers a democratized view of

beauty to which all can aspire (refer to appendix B). The campaign also has an implied moral purpose, one that takes on the ethical issues of consumerism: the psychology of self-esteem, the supposed link between the pressure to conform and eating disorders and the various stigmas attaching to old age and disfigurement.

The main issue is what makes women feel good. One approach assumes that there are certain classic looks, which we would all secretly love to possess. When we see a beautiful model promoting a brand we respond imaginatively and, for a moment or two, feel beautiful too. Rationally, we know the product will not change us, but the power of association is so great that, deep down, we feel as though a little of the model's magic has rubbed off.

Opposed to this is the idea that contemporary, self-confident women want to see figures and faces like their own celebrated in advertising. The problem here, however, is that the whole thrust of consumer culture suggest that as a society we are becoming more, not less, obsessed with the pursuit of perfection. Most of the advertisements do encourage women to stay thin and fit. However, some corporations like Dove have made an effort to promote the real beauty by advertising real women shows that we can remove theses modern and traditional of the “ ideal women”.