

Advertising at the edge of the apocalypse summary



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sut Jhally claims that advertising has become so intrusive and powerful that, unless precautionary action is taken, will destroy all of humanity and its successes. His credentials include: college professor of communication at University of Massachusetts Amherst, executive director of the Media Education Foundation, and an assortment of more than 40 documentaries on advertising and media consumption. At first Jhally explains how industrial capitalism has revolutionized the world; he also notes how capitalism's crowning achievement of innovation and the wealth of commodities.

In contrast, Jhally also argues that capitalism is very dependent on consumer consumption and without them, capitalism would collapse into stagnation and depression. In order to keep the continual consumption of their products, businesses use advertising to persuade the masses and their marketing techniques can also be found almost anywhere in the U. S. With advertising messages on everything from food to bathrooms to sidewalks – nearly any surface or location – marketers have now been perturbed with making their messages stand out amongst the ever-increasing competition.

In response, marketers are beginning to utilize the most influential forms of advertising, emotions and society. A question always asked is, “ Does happiness come from material objects? ” A majority of people say “ no”; yet when a research firm examined further what would qualify as a “ good quality of life”, researchers found economic security and success outranked the social values of love and family. A true irony of the survey is that a material object, by definition, cannot provide social relationships, which is the target of advertisers.

All humans feel the need for love and friendship, and this is played by advertising to create false social conformity. Jhally suggests in true definition, there is no such thing as society, only individuals and families. Society is intangible. Knowing this, advertisers precisely target the individual and creates a false society backing their product. Advertisements glamorize limelight culture and pleasure, more false illusions. These illusions defer the consumer away from real world problems like hunger, poverty, crime, and natural disasters.

Jhally argues that the consumer needs to revert back to worrying about real issues and leave behind their imaginary securities. Advertising has become so powerful with appeals to social remedy and emotion that it attracts consumers in such a way – to such extent – that consumers will go purchase new equipment, and not reuse what they have, because of the idea that “new is better,” adding to the depletion of natural resources. The environment is not a bottomless hole, resources are not infinite.

Jhally insists that abuse of the environment will lead to irreversible damage to the environment and it is up to the current generation of consumers to save the world. Sadly, advertisements have formed such a high-consumption society which primarily values self-interest and individualism. What is worse than current values stressing individual needs and immediate satisfaction, instead of compromise and more eco-friendly alternatives? If such values are allowed to prosper, there will be no incentive to invest into the future.

The destructive properties of capitalism are becoming more and more apparent in the social lives of consumers. Consumers love of materials, short

term temper, and individualism makes it difficult to believe of a prosperous future. A collective long-term effort is required in order to prevent such a failure. Jhally also emphasizes that a new society will need to be envisioned. One that does not dismiss individualism, yet values debate and nonconformity; a genuine human society.

The cost of failure is too large in order to not deal with the absence of responsibility, there must be a collective agreement to ensure that decisions made will be for the good of a prosperous future. Jhally has envisioned a society that acts differently than current capitalism. A society where social responsibility outweighs instant gratification and the true nature of a real human culture can flourish. Current advertising models have created a commercialized society where one marketer can only wonder how he or she will be able to stand out versus the competition.

Emotional appeal is becoming more used as it is the most effective form of advertising, appealing to basic human needs. The increase in this form of advertisement sobers the consumer and creates a “ me” and self-centered society. Jhally argues the main way for society’s future to be secured, is to invest in it today. Such an investment will require dedication and an extraordinary effort put on by all people to preserve what is still available, so that mankind can continue to develop and prosper.