

Magazine
advertisement that
portrays explicit
womens imagery
media essay



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Advertisement had been regarded as one of the most effective communication tools in persuading the audience to buy or to raise awareness on product, issues or services. Advertisement is effective because advertisement gives the audiences a basic knowledge of the product in just one picture. It attracts the audiences better because of the way a message was presented. In this capitalism world, companies, big or small compete against each other to market their product. The popularity of their brand is the measurement of their successfulness in doing business. That is the reason most companies spends a large amount of money in advertising. In Malaysia, a total of RM 130881 mil was spent on advertisement according to the statistic data from Nielsen Malaysia Advertising Expenditure Report (November 2010). In print media, especially in magazines, advertisement compliments the magazines. It completes the stories in the magazines and it gives the audience a subtle hint of what the magazine offers to the audiences.

However, in most advertisement, media stereotypes happen in most advertisement. " Advertisement develops a unique universe that might contain different messages about gender than the articles and photo spreads that accompany them." (Carter, 2004)

It shows that advertisement have greater influences towards the audience than the article. Most advertisement nowadays portrays a wide variety of media stereotypes against women. Women are frequently portrayed in their traditional work such as a happy and diligent domestic worker, a loyal wife who waits at home for her husband arrival from work and a nurturing mother. The only job that seems to be associated with women in

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advertisement is secretary, air stewardess and nurse. It is unusual for advertisement to picture women in jobs such as pilot, police or truck drivers.

“ Stereotyping women “ children” reflects a view of them as less mature, more emotional, and less competent than their male worker.” (Kroløkke, 2006, p. 81)

Apart from being portrayed in their traditional ways, women nowadays are portrayed as sex objects. Almost all of the advertisement uses women to sell their merchandise in sexual ways regardless of types of magazines. Most magazines portray woman in minimal clothing or semi nude. Such portrayal degrades woman’s dignity and can install a wrong perception into the audience’s mind. It will also strengthen the popular belief that women are subordinate to men and women are meant for serving men.

“ In advertising, women and men act in stereotypical ways, portraying ideal female and male behavior. As such, they not only conceal how women and men really act but also function prescriptively to show how they should act.” (Ibid, p. 78)

In this research, an analysis on portrayal of women in advertisement (magazines) will be done. The issue that will be highlighted is the frequency of women being portrayed in their traditional ways and in sexual ways. The other issue that will be highlighted is the reason such portrayal is being produced.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Magazine is one of the media that we frequently use. Popular magazines can have millions of viewers and this means that magazine influence a lot of people based on what they write and portray in the magazine.

Advertisement is one of the major compartments in a magazine and a magazine could not function without it. Portrayal of women is common in an advertisement. Be it as a social awareness advertisement or a car advertisement. The question now is how much advertisement in the magazines that portray women in their traditional roles and in sexual ways?

Another question that arises is what kind of advertisement that uses women in their traditional ways and/or in sexual ways to promote their services or merchandise more? The visualization of advertisement changes according to the time and technology. But some advertisement even with these changes, stick to the original ways of advertising their services and products.

As it was stated before, advertisement is one of the most powerful ways of persuading others. A lot of factors influences the way an advertisement is visualize. The portrayal of women images must have been caused by several of the factors. The question is why do advertisement uses such image?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To determine the magazine that publishes advertisement that portrays explicit women's imagery.

To analyze the types of advertisement that prone to using women in a traditional and/or explicit imagery in their advertisement.

To identify the causes of such portrayal.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study is important mainly to the public to create awareness.

Advertisement is very influential and can affect the way we perceive things.

Therefore, with this study, the public will have a better understanding of ways to evaluate women with a better value than sex. Besides that, this study is also important to women rights association to recognize types of advertisement that degrades women's dignity. This then would help them in urging the government to take action on the ever increasing advertisements that devalue women. It is also important to the advertiser themselves so that they are cautious with their ways of advertising. This study is also important to the government so they can create and enforce law to protect women's right.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. Introduction

A lot of studies had been done on advertisement and women. Mee- Eun Kang (1997) observed that most advertisement portrays women in a traditional way in print media. According to Eun-Kang's findings,

"...images of women in 1991 advertisement did not significantly change from the images found in 1979 advertisement."

Her findings indicated that advertisement in magazines did not change drastically. Women were still portrays as housekeepers and a mother to a

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child. This however is relevant to that year because the second wave of feminism had just launched. The second wave of feminism started at the late 1960's and early 1970's. Feminist were protesting against the beauty pageants. They were opposing with an assumption that the winner won because of how she look and not what she do and what they think about. There are three waves of feminism, the first wave emphasis in women's right in voting, the second wave is protesting on how the public view women generally and how the media portrayed inequality in portraying gender and the celebration of woman diversity and the introduction to the cyber girl is the third wave. Even though feminist had launch a radical attack on the degrading ways of evaluating women, the changes are slow to take place as media especially advertisement continue picturing women in a household. Her findings were strengthen by Atoff Nassif and Barrie Gunter (2008) whose findings shows that women were strongly associated with household products. Products such as dishwasher liquid, clothes detergent and kitchen appliances product were strongly linked to women based on their study. Besides that, body products such as soap, shampoo and lotion are also associated with women. It is uncommon even until today, men advertising body products unless the product is specifically for men.

Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham (1990) justify the advertiser tactics with a statement that such portrayal is important to bring the advertiser and audiences together. What the advertiser had done was only taking what was socially known and accepted to the public. The real jobs of women according to social institution are to take care of their husband and children and keeping the house warm, nice and cozy. Mallika Das(2000) and Katharina

Lindner (2004) found out that as time goes by, the portrayal of women in their traditional roles has decreased but the images of women in sexual ways increased. Their findings were strengthened by Julie M. Stankiewicz and Francine Rosselli (2007) study that shows 75.98% of women that appear in men's magazine, be it in articles, pictures and advertisement appear as sex objects.

2.2 Media stereotypes against women

Media stereotypes are a common representative of a person or a group of person. It generally put an understanding in everyone that certain people behave certain way traditionally. Media stereotypes can be problematic if they represent certain group of people women, for example in a negative way or confined them to certain behavior or jobs. It is unwise to have an understanding of certain people from the media as the media can be deceiving. As time goes by some of the stereotypical ways of seeing people are not applicable in the modern days. Knowledge and technology are always developing and by the increased of knowledge in hand, people will surely change along with time. Erving Goffman (1979) asserts that,

“ If anything, advertisers conventionalize our conventions, stylize what is already a stylization, make frivolous use of what is already something considerably cut off from contextual controls. Their hype is hyper-ritualisation.”

According to him, the gender representation that we see is meaningful to us because they are ideal gender representations. It is what the society has taught us. Wonder Woman, Cat Woman, Storm, Rogue and Alice Cullen are <https://assignbuster.com/magazine-advertisement-that-portrays-explicit-womens-imagery-media-essay/>

the tough women in the media industries. They are strong but they still maintain perfect skin, are thin and wore fashionable clothes. On the other hand, Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are women who are very hardworking, hate messy stuff, cooks and cleans for the family, friendly to everyone including animals, fair, beautiful and awaits for their prince charming to come and swept their feet away. These two examples are the portrayal of women today and women in the past. Women today are portrayed as strong and independent while women in the past are portrayed as dependent to the people (or animals) around them. But despite their differences, they were portrayed in a common way. Both women today and women in the past were portrayed as having a perfect skin, fair, beautiful and are using fashionable clothes. These women images that the narrator give is called the " male gaze". According to Laura Mulvey (1975),

" In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to -be-looked-at-ness."

She asserts that because the camera is dominated by male, the audiences view women in a patriarchal way. Women are being put on a pedestal because of this portrayal. Women across the country have the mentality that being thin is healthy and beautiful. Other researchers, Tom Reichert (2009) agrees with the statement by saying that both men and women are exposed to the decorative images that they value women's attractiveness more and devalue their intellect, skills and competencies.

2. 3 Women as sex objects.

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Today, we are bombarded with thousands and thousands of advertisement that shows women in provoking ways. According to Kilbourne (1999), sexual imagery nowadays is not only confined in pornography media, but also in advertisement. Advertisement now adopts some of the action from violent pornography. This then confirms other types of stereotypical views on women that are women are subordinated to men. She found that woman's legs, breasts or thighs have always become the part to grab the viewer's attention, making women are seen as objects rather than a human being. Their bodies and their sexuality become a sex object when they are connected to the product or services that the advertisement represents. Advertisements such as Lux, Rejoice, Dove and Enchanter have that effect. They will picture a woman using their product and in the advertisement, they reveal some skin. Parts such as shoulder and legs are always shown to the audiences. Almost all products that show women in revealing products suggest that the audiences can have sex-related benefit. For example, the Axe body sprays. In its recent advertisement in the television, it shows that user grabs woman's attention and the woman will automatically give the user her phone number. This advertisement suggests to us that, if you use this body spray, you too will get phone numbers from random woman that pass you by.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study is done by using content analysis method as suggested by Barelson (1971) to analyze the portrayal of women in a general interest magazine. Content analysis enables us to elaborate communication theories and to test the hypothesis of the study. It also can be used to compare the content of the media with the real situation. Barelson (1971) defined content analysis as a research technique with the purpose to give a systematic, objective and quantitative view on the communication content.

From the definition, there are four important concepts that should be look upon which are;

Objective- achieved when we have a content analysis that were defined precisely. This means that the research depends on the rules and not the analyzer.

Systematic-(1) A set of rules used in the same way for all analyze content.

(2) Category is formed so that all related content were analyze.

(3) Design analyze to save related data with the question or hypothesis.

3. Quantitative- The sum of the frequency of the related advertisement being published.

4. Content- Refers to whatever that is written and published in the media.

3. 2. Population and sampling

The population of this study is 72 magazines in Malaysia. Magazines include men's, women's, medical, sports, news and business. The magazine

advertisement was the unit of analysis for this study. The method used to select a sample size is the non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is used because statistical procedure is not needed when selecting cases from given population. The type of non-probability sampling used is purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the respondent are chosen based on the researchers own expertise and judgments that the particular sample fit into the characteristics of the populations. The first step in obtaining the sample is to browse through the book store for magazines. Then, dependent to the researcher's judgment, he or she would choose any magazines that he or she thinks are relevant for the studies. In this research, advertisement that featured human subjects were collected from December 2010 to February 2011 popular magazines.

Conceptualization of Variables (concepts)

The type of variable used in this research is independent variable. Independent variable is variable that is controlled and manipulated by the researcher. Types of magazines and advertisement are the main variables. Types of magazines are the various kind of magazine available for viewing pleasure. Types of advertisements are the various kind of advertisement used to promote product and services. The measurement for this variable is nominal measures. Nominal measures are variables whose attributes have only the characteristics of exhaustiveness and mutually exclusiveness.

3. 5. Data Analysis

This study uses descriptive analysis for the data analysis based on

descriptive statistics collected from the selected advertisement. The <https://assignbuster.com/magazine-advertisement-that-portrays-explicit-womens-imagery-media-essay/>

descriptive statistics that will be use is multivariate statistics. Multivariate statistics is statistics that shows relationship between three or more variables. Researchers can determine if the bivariate relationship is true or not by putting a variable as a control variable. The variables that can be use for this study are types of magazine and the frequency stereotypes happen in advertisement. Elaboration on the relationship and effects each variable has with the help of example will be used to support findings in the research. Mean percentage will be used to calculate the relationship. Besides that ANOVA will be used to measure the independent variables. The independent variables are types of magazines, types of advertisement and causes of imagery.

3. 6. Methodological Issues

The issues arise when doing this research is the financial constraint. Researcher has to buy all the magazines related to the subject. There are a lot of magazines and the prices differ according to the material used to make the magazine and the thickness of the book. With limited budget, the researcher will not be able to buy all of the magazines.

Time constraint is also one of the issue arise when doing this assignment. Magazines are only published once or twice a month and with the deadline coming nearer, researcher can't afford any delay in doing his/her research. Other than that, researcher still has to attend class while conducting the research. Researcher need to manage his/her time efficiently so that it won't disturb his/her study time and research time.

The availability of related magazines is also an issue to the researcher. Some bookstore does not sell magazines and some bookstore has limited types of magazines. This resulting in researcher to have limited data on his/her research.

Researcher also faced with problems such as not knowing the overall location of each bookstore. Since researcher is not originated from this place, the knowledge of location of bookstore is limited.