

# Writing an image analysis essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Since the 1920's, the media has been an essential ingredient in developing the American culture that we live in. Advertising leads consumers into thinking that their product is a product that they need and can't live without advertising has promoted more than commodities in American culture. It dictated American values as well. Advertisements make people believe they can find happiness, even perfection, through the purchase of products. Although, we as consumers control what products get advertised, the advertisers hold quite a bit of power over us.

Because images used in advertising are often idealized, they eventually set standards that Americans feel the need to achieve. Advertisements define what the 'ideal' image is, and show us how to obtain it. It is the definition of idealism that gets risky. Advertisers have the power to promote positive or negative images. Unfortunately, most of the roles portrayed by women in these advertisements are redundant. These negative portrayals of women are the ones that have been most successful in selling products. It is easy to understand why men accept these negative images of women being placed in a lower role.

However, these images are popular among women as well. Why would women willingly turn themselves into objects? When definitions of beauty are placed on every billboard and advertisements, it is difficult to deny the power of visual images and their promotion of an ideal female beauty in the materialistic culture. Advertisers, by setting ideals, not only sell their products, but also reaffirm traditional gender roles in mainstream America. Images nowadays are more sexual. Whether the image was a young

unmarried woman or a dark lady of the night, advertisements defined women through their sexual availability.

Did these sexual images portray women as having power over men, or did these concentrating on female sexuality? Although some power might have been gained, most of the women in these sexual ads are still depicted as objects. The woman, like the product, is to be consumed by men for visual pleasure and by women for self-definition and survival in the society. The weakness of women as sexual objects is also very obvious when looking closer at the advertisements. Any depiction of a woman who is almost not wearing anything makes her look unprotected and powerless, especially when placed next to a physically stronger man.

She may attract men and draw their attention, but this temptation is for the man to “ have her”. Women are more likely to be portrayed as sexually dressed, partially covered, or nude than in regular clothes. Also when depicting women, most advertisements will concentrate primarily on her body parts rather than facial expressions. Over 50% of commercials portraying women contained at least one camera shot focusing on the woman’s chest. Because of the lack of emotion on women’s faces, all aspects of her personality are void. Again she is seen as unintelligent and no threat to the male gender.

With so much exposure of women in these roles, women themselves feel the need to be chesty, blonde, and brainless in order to receive any attention from men at all. Because men enjoy these images, women try to copy them, which degrade themselves. These images represents our culture’s image of

the perfect beauty, and women must supposedly stimulate it to gain love, respect, and power. Perhaps one of the most recent, successful, and controversial ad campaigns of the 1990's is that of Calvin Klein. In those advertisements, Klein focuses ironically on his model's expressions and deface women altogether.

However, these expressions are similar to those of a scared child. The naked female model in turn looks even more unprotected than when she was faceless. In the advertisement of Kate Moss and Marky Mark, Moss is visually much weaker than her counterpart. Marky Mark's rippling muscles completely overwhelm the body of the Kate Moss. While Mark sits back relaxed, Moss holds onto his torso and looks to the camera like a scared rabbit. Both models are in their underwear, yet Moss wear no bra, exposing her ever more. Another advertisement, Moss is depicted again as an innocent child.

However she looks as if she is about to be, or has been abused. Her fingers touch her lips as if she is not allowed to speak, and her eyes look as if they are beaten. Here, Moss's breasts are completely exposed. Instead of being covered however, Moss appears to be almost prepubescent, portraying an image of a victim of child abuse. She, like the victim in child pornography, stares helplessly into the camera. In this image Moss is totally powerless and unprotected. This advertisement was bill boarded in Times Square and boosted Calvin Klein sales ten fold.

Why, if Moss is not so ladylike, is she so attractive to men? Before Calvin Klein's founding, it was thought that concentration on a woman's attractive

physical features was what amazed men. But this idea of Moss as a helpless child, with no real ladylike curves at all, reiterates the argument that the male attraction to certain ads lies in the sexual power the ad gives to them. In a society like America, where women are slowly gaining more economic power, men are especially comforted by images such as these.

An even bigger question is, ' why do women accept these images? Why do they try to adapt these to the American culture? Women see these images as attractive to men and then feel the need to fulfill them. Unfortunately, the body of Kate Moss is almost impossible to duplicate. This ideal body image is one of the leading reasons for the recent rise of losing weight in young girls. These women images are causing extreme low self esteem to women in the nineties. Women are either depressed because they feel fat, or they are sick because they are malnourished. They are again forced into a helpless role, not only mentally now, but physically as well.

Fortunately, there seems to be a more conservative effort in the modern role of advertising. Advertisers are trying to get away from putting the wrong elements in their advertising. This, of course, is due to the rise of more socially and politically aware of females. These wrong elements include the sexual objectification of women and its relationship to violence, the negative attitude toward mature physical features in women, and an unrealistic skinny ideal beauty's standard. Recently Calvin Klein had to withdraw its 1996 jeans campaign. The commercials and advertisements were accused of reenacting child pornography.

The phenomenon of advertising is either we, as an American culture, promote its images, or if the images in advertisements promote our culture. Unfortunately it is a bit of both. Women did, in fact, escape the domestic image of the fifties, so there is the chance that these sexual images will disappear as well. As women enter the higher ranks of society, I feel the trend towards more positive female ad campaigns will follow. However, in order for women to advance, they must try their hardest to resist the advertisements of the present day.