

# The way we see things essay

[Business](#), [Decision Making](#)



The Way We See Things. Introduction. With globalization at our disposal in today's world, it is rather an understatement for one to say that consumer behavior can be put under systematic study using common economic principles. The world has become so dynamic, that human wants sometimes can best be described as imaginary rather than the conventional economic terms, which describes it as being unlimited. Interestingly, many advertising agencies are fully aware of this fact, hence, their expertise has gone beyond this imagination too.

They are fully equipped with a perfect knowledge of consumer behaviors, which involves the study of how people buy, what they buy, when they buy and why they buy; elements from psychology, sociology, socio-psychology, anthropology and economics; attempts to understand the buyer's decision processes or decision making process (both individually and in groups) and the studies of the characteristics of individual consumers such as demographics, psychographics, and behavioral variables in an attempt to understand people's wants as well as assess influences on the consumers from groups such as family, friends, reference groups, and society in general. Consequently, these advert firms use all sorts of marketing strategies to create scintillating packets of excitement in the minds of consumers, thereby persuading them to purchase commodities at all cost. Consumption involves the use and disposal of products as well as the frequency with which they are purchased. Product use is often of great interest to the marketer, because this may influence how a product is best positioned or how we can encourage increased consumption. Since many environmental problems result from product disposal (e.

g., motor oil being sent into sewage systems to save the recycling fee, or garbage piling up at landfills) this is also an area of interest. Thus, a marketing professional today, is believed to have some sort of extraordinary powers that enable him to sell anything, even if it means “ selling ice blocks to an Eskimo”. Thus, this has become a common concept of advertising in our today’s dynamic world. The question now is; what leads to these fantasies found in human wants today? The answer lies in John Berger’s words as he states, “ the state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour” (Berger 2).

Here the author refers to the desire of an average human to attain a unique material nature enviable to all. On the other hand, he points out that these desires are what publicity merchants exploit. In cognizance of the above facts, this paper is a simple analysis of the influence of publicity or advertisements on consumer behavior.

The basic facts of this analysis are from a liberal perspective, and the main ideas are drawn from two main sources namely; John Berger’s analysis of advertisement|John Carpenter’s movie, “ They Live”. John Berger’s Analysis of Advertisement. John Berger in his book, “ Ways of Seeing”, presents both verbal and visual essays that expand upon his central tenet that “ the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (Berger 1). A way of seeing in this formulation is an active process that makes the act of seeing both a personal and a cultural matter.

Personally, a way of seeing is embedded in how a photographer represents his subject, or in how an admirer isolates her object of affection in a crowd.

Ways of seeing extend beyond personal activities to become cultural activities because seeing is an act that is more than the passive mechanical processes of our eye's retina. Seeing is the result of an active and learned process of looking. In his views, John Berger points out that the basic ideas of advertisement are based on the sights of human nature, what we see and the way we see it. In more descriptive words, the human sight is part of the psychological factors that manipulate our innermost desires. It is the hidden ideas contained in billboards as well as all sorts of devices used in publicity. Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure-in-itself. It is always about the future buyer.

It offers him an image of him made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell (Berger 2). In addition it tends to send the message, " I know what you need right now". For example, by understanding that consumers are more receptive to food advertising when they are hungry, publicity firm learn to schedule snack advertisements late in the afternoon. By understanding that new products are usually initially adopted by a few consumers and only spread later, and then only gradually, to the rest of the population, they learn that companies that introduce new products must be well financed so that they can stay afloat until their products become a commercial success and it is important to please initial customers, since they will in turn influence many subsequent customers' brand choices. The effectiveness of advertisement is precisely its ability to feed upon the real. It starts by working on a natural appetite for pleasure or fantasy, and ends up, not as a celebration of a pleasure itself, but that of the future buyer. Publicity

is about social relations, not objects. It aims to portray glamour in the minds of the potential consumer and thus the happiness of being envied.

Being envied is a solitary form of reassurance. The spectator-buyer is meant to envy herself as he will become if he buys the product. It is the culture of the consumer society, and propagates through images, society's belief in itself (Berger 2-3). In summary, Berger points out that the common principle used by the advertisers often the psychology that hides all material properties but the glamorous benefits of the products, which is the only thing the consumer tends to see. Another fact about the power of advertisement is an essential idea portrayed in the movie, "They Live" by John Carpenter.

John Carpenter's Critique of Consumerism. John Carpenters movie "They Live", tell the story of John Nada (Roddy Piper), a homeless laborer who finds work on a Los Angeles construction site. Once, after eating at a soup kitchen and spending the night, he notices odd behavior at a small church across the street.

Investigating, he discovers that the church's soup kitchen is a secret compartment, whereby cardboard boxes were stacked everywhere. After a police raid in which the church was destroyed with a bulldozer, he returns to the sight and discover a pair of sun glasses. When Nada later dons the glasses for the first time, the world appears in shades of grey, with significant differences. He notices that a billboard now simply displays the word "Obey"; Another billboard (normally displaying "Come to the Caribbean" written above a lovely woman lying on a beach) now displays the text "Marry and Reproduce." He also sees that paper money bears the

words “ This is your God.” All printed matter around him contains subliminal advertising. He later attends a meeting, where he learns that aliens, who were secretly dwelling with the people, have a primary method of control of a signal being sent out on television, which is why the general public cannot see the aliens for what they are.

An unknown but brilliant inventor has created a lens (it is called a Hoffman lens, perhaps named after Albert Hoffman, the inventor of LSD; this is not explained in the movie). The lens shows the world as it really is. The sunglasses, which are also available as contact lenses, interfere with the aliens’ hypnotic signal. The meeting is raided by the police, who shot to kill. Nada and his friend Frank escape with the help of one of the wrist devices. They find themselves in a network of underground passages that link hidden parts of the alien society including a port for space travel.

Through the passages they find the aliens are throwing a party for their human collaborators. The more political elements of the film are derived from Carpenter’s growing distaste with the ever-increasing commercialization of 1980s popular culture and politics. He remarked, “ I began watching TV again. I quickly realized that everything we see is designed to sell us something...

It’s all about wanting us to buy something. The only thing they want to do is take our money.”(Swires 34). To this end, Carpenter thought of sunglasses as being the tool to seeing the truth. This movie tries to bring to the limelight the persuasive powers of marketing. It is simply trying to tell its viewers that

there are hidden intensions of most advertising, which may not actually be beneficial to the buyers.

This is thus a reflection of one of John Berger's views, which holds the fact that; publicity is eventless, and is situated in a future continually deferred, excludes the present and so eliminates all becoming, all development. A good lesson worthy of note in this movie is that it warns its viewers about the relationship between us and what we see. The objects that people choose to look at, and by extension, the meanings that are attributed to those visual objects, can seem anthropological in nature.

Some approaches to visual communication draws on sociolinguistics of the 1960s and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis specifically. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that the grammar and vocabulary of a person's language has a relationship to that person's culture, thought, behavior, and worldview (Hoijer). Anything may count as communicative as a person takes it to be. Thus, the ways of seeing that lead to different interpretations and uses of the pathological anatomy on display are representative of different ways of being in and understanding the world. Works Cited. Berger, John. *The Way We See Things*. New York, Random House, 1972.

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