

Discussion #1: Advertisement Industry's Impact on Women in Society

Tingxuan Chen

Communication 2850: Media and Citizenship

Dr. Melissa Foster

7 September 2023

With the advancement of technology and the economy, advertisements have flooded people's lives. However, some advertisements often feature objectification towards women, and creating a toxic cultural environment. Our epistemic beliefs and engagement with mass media impact our knowledge of objective reality (Foster, 2023). These advertisements tend to affect how women perceive themselves and even how people perceive each other. Women's social status as citizen is affected by these advertisements.

Killing Us Softly IV showed me how women are being poisoned by the advertising industry. In Kilbourne's words, "It's an environment full of unhealthy images where they sacrifice women's health and well-being for profit" (Jhally, 2010). In the media advertisements women are often have flawless faces and perfectly curved bodies that make you wonder if it is real or not. These glossy images are photo-shopped since no one can be completely flawless. However, when it is all over the place, these images of beauty become the dominant consciousness. Women begin to feel dissatisfied with their faces and bodies, and they begin to become anxious. At the same time, men begin to believe that women should look like models in the advertisements or else they are not beautiful. These advertisements have led to a decline in the social status of women. Nowadays, people's mainstream aesthetics pursue white skin, young faces, and slim bodies. I'd also be attracted to these perfect bodies and pretty faces and desperately want to be like that. In China, many clothing industries make clothes in smaller and smaller sizes, labeling a small dress as a large size, causing many women to have body anxiety. Sometimes these clothes are so small that I feel like it's a children's dress and I can't even fit into it, which creates some negative emotions and a lack of confidence in myself.

In addition to this, advertisements turn women into commodities and portray them as objects of men's desire or even as victims. Surveys have found that women are physically exposed

in advertisements four times more often than men (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Sexualized behaviors and appearances are often rewarded by society, so the advertising industry doubles down on these messages for profit. The advertising industry makes money by poisoning women's minds and health, marginalizing them from society. We cannot decide if something is an act of active citizenship only in terms of what is best for the majority (Foster, 2023). In addition to the pornographic advertisements that are constantly conveying that women are controlled by men, the affiliation of women in advertisements reflects the difference in status between men and women in real life. The domestication of women is also reflected in advertisements for household goods. The advertisements constantly portray women's belonging to the family, which suggest a lower status. They are responsible for serving and caring for their family, and doing household chores, and that women are used as icons of what it means to be a household product (Siswat, 2019). While husbands have a higher social status because they are earning more money. The messages conveyed in these advertisements form stereotypes of women and victimize more women.

Advertising is a microcosm of society, although as society progresses and develops, people are starting to objectify women less. We can see the emergence of some plus-size models and the reduction of pornographic content. Society empowers women, but the reality is that because of the toxicity of this perception, women are still being marginalized and overwhelmed by men (Hsu, 2019). We can't run away from advertising, the only thing we can do is educate and reflect to make more people aware of the equal rights between men and women. Reflect and revise are necessary so that we can make sure the information is accurate (Foster, 2023). Women are not an accessory to men and should not be marginalized by society, they are an important part of what makes up this society.

References

- Foster, M. (2023). *Defining Citizenship*. Lecture. Carmen Course Page.
<https://mediasite.osu.edu/Mediasite/Play/90c2b48450ac4c63901b43d4248597bc1d>
- Foster, M. (2023). *Social Science and Media*. Lecture. Carmen Course Page.
<https://mediasite.osu.edu/Mediasite/Play/c7252fabf3004544b6875b0afd7c80291d>
- Foster, M. (2023). *Fox News Effect*. Lecture. Carmen Course Page.
<https://mediasite.osu.edu/Mediasite/Play/969c47e5378e49fa96fd30926720799c1d>
- Hsu, T. (2019). Still a 'Mad Men' World: The advertising industry has publicly embraced doing more to empower women, but it has continued to sideline and stereotype them. *New York Times* (1923-) <http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/still-mad-men-world/docview/2748580401/se-2>
- Jhally, S. (Director). (2010). *Kill us softly IV* [Film]. Media Education Foundation.
- Siswati, E. (2019). Women's attitude towards representation of women domestication in advertisement. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 32(1), 80–94.
<https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.V32I12019.80-94>
- Stankiewicz, J.M., Rosselli, F. (2008). Women as Sex Objects and Victims in Print Advertisements. *Sex Roles* 58, 579–589 <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1007/s11199-007-9359-1>