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Gender messages in contemporary advertisements

The modern advertisements are a tool for interacting with the viewers, yet they have made a negative impact in the contemporary multi-mediated consumerist civilizations based on the gender. They have successfully instilled stereotypes about the physical appearances, roles, occupations, and characters of men and women. (Eisend 72).

People of all ages are influenced by these advertisements, who consider the fictional life depicted in newspapers and magazines, as well as on television and the internet, to be their real reality. People try to adapt the things they see in the advertisement in their lifestyles to conform with the conceptions that these commercials create, resulting in increased gender inequality even in the modern era.

Advertisements are intended to sell something and persuade its viewers to buy something.

We see plenty of advertisements about beauty products, cosmetics, and foods, around us and more than half of all these advertisements employ sexualized beauty to sell their goods.

(Body Image – Advertising and Magazines). Models in these advertisements are said to have perfect bodies, even though they are photoshopped. All such modern advertisements have created a misbelief in the minds of people about that beauty is measured by how one looks

and acts. Consequently, people have built desires to change their physical appearances and they wish to look in specific ways. These advertisements have increased body-shaming and disapproval of one's own body in the society.

The author says, "Furthermore, stereotyping of physical characteristics, such as idealized body portrayals (e.g., slim female bodies, muscular male bodies), was found to correlate with reduced body satisfaction and self-esteem." (Baird and Grieve; Dens, De Pelsmacker, and Janssens; Grabe, Ward, and Hyde cited in Eisend 73). Men are portrayed as physically active individuals who have tall, muscular, and robust physiques, whereas women are portrayed as physically attractive, flawless, and thin. A high street beauty cosmetic brand called 'Benefit' advertised about one of its products with a tagline saying, "Skip class, not concealer" (Benefit). This commercial shows a tired looking young girl who is holding an alarm clock and is lying in her bed where her books are kept, while a teacher is standing beside her, indicating a school concept. This advertisement was targeted at young girls who study in schools and colleges and conveys the message that beauty comes before education. There was a huge outrage about this advert and people highly criticized it for sending the inappropriate message.

The advertisement discussed above paragraph is very ridiculous. It conveys a negative message of giving importance to the appearance more than attending classes at school. Sellers use their irresponsible marketing strategies by putting such advertisements at display to attract and induce customers to buy their products for profit maximization is simply incredulous. Commercials that focus on the looks of people create a sense of insecurity in the minds of the viewers about their looks. These advertisements are unrealistic and make people compare their bodies to those of the models that they show. It has escalated low self-esteem among people, leading to negative self-imaging which is harmful for the health of people

(Antoniou and Akrivos 83). It can cause mental health disorders like anxiety and depression, linked with a concern to modify one's appearance. (Antoniou and Akrivos 85)

Even though it is the twenty-first century, women in the workplace still have less authority. In some way, modern commercials have also contributed to this. Several advertisements can be seen today in which women appear to be doing mostly domestic housework, cleaning, cooking, teaching, and caring for children (Antoniou and Akrivos 84). Men, on the other hand, are shown in commercials as engineers, managers, and athletes, doing high-ranked jobs. (Antoniou and Akrivos 84) These advertisements have shaped the views of its viewers about vocations. Men are expected to do jobs that demand physical strength and technical expertise, while women are expected to household duties and are criticized for working outside their homes.

According to William O'Barr, "When men are depicted in parental roles, they often appear as adult playmates, usually in sports or other outdoor contexts" (Timke and O'Barr 85). In patriarchal household women are expected to make men happy by taking good care of the home. Whereas men are responsible for earning a living to meet the demands of his family. Numerous stereotypical advertisements about kitchen and cleaning products have shown women in them. One big example of such an advertisement is about one of Mr. Clean's cleaning product, with the phrase "This Mother's Day, get back to the job that really matters" (Mr. Clean). Clearly, women are the targeted segment of this advertisement, in this advertisement a mother can be seen using the Mr. Clean cleaning product while her daughter is standing next to her who seems to be interested in the work her mother is doing.

The advertisement of Mr. Clean is sexist as it has regarded women as being liable for household responsibilities. Not only this, but the advertisement also tells that it is an ideal gift to be gifted to mothers on Mother's Day, which implies that they do not even have a single

day to themselves for resting and having fun. The message conveyed by this commercial is that women are anticipated to clean the house and being a mother or a wife is their ultimate job even on a holiday. It is a poor marketing advertisement that has depicted women negatively.

Advertisement have shaped the role behaviors and character of males and females in the society. In today's commercials, men are shown as powerful, skilled, domineering, bold, rational, aggressive, and dispassionate (Antoniou and Akrivos 81). Women, on the other hand, are shown as charmers, unassertive, nurturers, compromisers, sensitive, and emotional (Antoniou and Akrivos 81). Men and women are anticipated to shape their characters as laid down by these contemporary stereotypical adverts, without giving them the freedom and choice to choose what they wish to be.

Pampers is a well-known childcare brand. Its advertisement showcases generally women taking care of their babies and nurturing them. In one of its commercials it shows a mother holding her sleeping baby close to her chest, with the tagline, "love at first touch" (Pampers). The advertisement shows that the baby is lying calmly on her mother and is in deep sleep. The audience of this commercial is the mothers of infants who are solely expected to nurture and take care of their child. Men are less often shown in such advertisements where they perform, they role of caregivers and fathers for their little ones. The author says, "So, a man who takes cares of his children, manages the house and is a source of emotional support (i.e., someone with feminine traits or in a traditionally feminine role) is likely to be considered a homosexual." (Deaux and Lewis cited in Antoniou and Akrivos 81).

Women are accepted by the society when the perform the duties of nurtures and care givers and when they showcase emotional and sensitive traits, as these traits have been characterized as feminine. On the contrary, if a man performs the duties of a nurturer, takes care of his

house, and exhibits sensitive behaviour, he is questioned about his sexual orientation. This characterization of personality traits is deeply embedded in the cultural societies and those who do not comply with them are looked upon as different.

Advertisements are a great way of communicating ideas and views to the public. However, many of them have significantly promoted gender-based stereotypes in the society. This has successfully created a major inequality gap between the males and females in today's civilized community by not only decreasing the self confidence of people by demonstrating body types which they say are perfect, but also by creating a distinction between personal and professional opportunities for men and women, and labelling personality and behavioural characteristics as masculine and feminine. The stiff gender standards created by the stereotypical advertisements can constrain the opportunities and choices of people who do not conform to them, making them feel inferior.

The marketing industries should keep their social responsibilities in mind and focus on creating advertisements that educate its viewers about gender equality through its goods and service. They must also ensure that people who do not fall into either the masculine or the feminine categories are not offended. Through advertisements, the viewers should be made aware that physical beauty is not the only beauty one should care about, and love for all body types should be encouraged. Awareness should also be created that the role of homemakers, nurtures and caregivers is not only of the women, but men can also perform these duties. Good and positive advertisements can surely help to break these traditional stereotypes, if proper guidelines are laid for the advertisers to create advertisements that do not depict gender standards.

Appendix

Picture 1 Benefit Ad (Benefit)

RISE AND
Boi-ing!
SKIP CLASS.
NOT
CONCEALER

Don't snooze on your skin. Make it flawless with our **boi-ing** concealer collection. What blemishes, dark circles and uneven skin? Wake up, cover up and face the day flawless and fabulous.

Shop boi-ing

The advertisement features a woman with long, wavy brown hair lying in bed, looking tired with her head on her hand. A small, tiny woman in a pink dress stands on the bed, holding a sign that says 'boi-ing'. A black alarm clock is visible on the bed. The background is a soft, out-of-focus room.

Picture 2 Mr. Clean Ad (Mr. Clean)



Picture 3 Pampers Ad (Pampers)



love at
first touch

Pampers
swaddlers

#1 Choice
of Hospitals*

Wrap your baby in the most trusted comfort and protection of **Pampers Swaddlers**, the only diaper trusted to be the **#1 Choice of Hospitals.***

*Based on sales of the newborn hospital diaper

Pampers
lovesleep&play

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 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cosmeticsbusiness.com%2Fnews%2Farticle_page%2FBenefit_Cosmetics_slammed_by_consumers_for_skip_class_not_concealer_advert%2F131288&psig=AOvVaw3VY29NxOOE9LGh29vPOmpw&ust=1638677899839000&source=images&cd>.
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Research Essay Academic Integrity Statement

I, Gurman Kaur, confirm that the work presented in this assignment is my own. I have followed the assignment guidelines located in the course syllabus.

Summarizing/Paraphrasing:

When I have summarized/paraphrased writing by other people (e.g. academic articles), I have used entirely my own words. Also, I have included an in-text citation (listing the author's last name and page number in parentheses) at the end of every sentence that is summarized/paraphrased. The only sentences in this assignment that do not provide an in-text citation at the end of them are the ones that contain my unique analysis/arguments.

Quoting:

When I have quoted from other people, I have made sure that these quotes are fully enclosed in quotation marks and are followed by an in-text citation (listing the author's last name and page number in parentheses) at the end of the sentence.

Bibliography:

I have included the full publication information for all external sources that I make reference to in my essay (including academic articles, advertisements, websites, etc) formatted as per MLA. I have submitted a copy of the advertisements and academic articles I make reference to in this assignment.

Consequences of Academic Misconduct/Dishonesty:

I understand that *any* form of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, self-plagiarism, submitting another person's work as my own, etc.) will result in a grade of "F" (0%) on the assignment. All incidents of academic misconduct will be immediately reported to the Office of Student Affairs and the Student Rights and Responsibilities Advisor who maintain a central database of all incidents of academic misconduct at Capilano University. Further actions may be taken, including involuntary withdrawal from the course or program, suspension, or expulsion from the university.

Signed (First and Last Name): Gurman Kaur

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Date: 2/12/2021