



CRITIQUE OF ADVERTISING WORLD

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We are influenced by advertisements at subliminal level much deeper than it appears apparently. Ads influence our decisions and the way we think. In Ad world, usual men and women are presented in an unusual manner. People are influenced to buy products by influencing them with the help of images of 'perfect' men and women. 'Images' rule today's world. Everything that once "directly lived has moved away into a representation" (Elliott 187). Modern Ad world has created a pseudo world where 'created' images affect us. We as consumers don't rationalize about the superficiality of the Ad world before making purchasing decisions. The real is no longer real in the Ad world.

Everything is an image which is hollow inside. What is normally taken as a solid and real world is actually just a tissue of dreamlike images (Barry 87). Ad world sells images which are not real but virtual pictures. The desire to be that 'perfect' man or woman lures the consumer to buy the products. People are made to believe through Ads that appearance is the most important thing for an individual. These Ads offer a limited understanding of their full-fledged personality. These Ads make people compare themselves to the so called perfect images of men and women without realizing the truth of these superficial images.

Women's arena as shown in the ads centers on their bodies and their clothes. A stratified image of women is presented in the Ads. Women are made to believe that their appearance and body is their chief asset. Zero figure these days is presented as the target to be achieved whereas the full personality of a woman is not taken into consideration. This dream world is created with a purpose to influence the consumers' decisions. Flawless faces of women are presented to sell false hope that the cosmetic products being sold will make the women beautiful and more importantly 'fair'. Most of the information in the ads is deceptive (Guinn 100).

The obsession with the perfect six pack abs grips the men. The desire to be a macho man makes them buy all those brands with which the false concept of perfect/strong man is associated which gives them the feeling of a hunk. For selling cigarettes and alcohol, the image of masculinity is exploited. Cigarette smoking man is presented as a virile and tough man. These ads have as heroes rough and tough, adventurous men telling consumers to “Live Life Kingsize”. Cancer causing cigarettes are associated with images of strong men who do difficult things in life and are daring thereby giving wrong information to the consumers.

Consumers don’t exercise their rationality to deconstruct these false images. Advertising is no longer a fair discussion of product’s merits. Advertisements reinforce the stereotype that fair skin is desirable and sought after. Also the idea of slim body or zero figure is promoted through ads which makes people believe that appearance is be all and end all of existence. This also leads to eating disorders like anorexia. On the other hand, advertisements also promote the unhealthy foods that are high in sugar, fats and salt.

Advertisements actually sell brand names. People have a profound brand loyalty even when the other brands are almost the same and in tests they cannot discriminate between their favourite brands and the other ones. Consumers actually smoke an image associated with a particular brand. The most spectacularly successful image building has been done by the automobile industry. The automobile has become far more than a mere means of conveyance. Bigger the car, higher the status is thought to be. It is a moving symbol of one’s status.

Juvenile audience is an easy target as they don’t exercise choices based on rationality. Children engage in unhealthy habits. They develop materialistic feelings. Children demand more toys and other products. They are not able to identify these advertisements as lies. Also advertisements create ‘lack’ and insist consumers to buy things they don’t actually need. Consumers indulge in compulsive buying.

One cannot deny the necessity of advertising but people should be careful about the necessity of rationalizing while buying products. We shouldn’t be carried away by material things. Jurgen Habermas believes that modern culture harbours a rational potential that can contribute to the process of enlightenment. Modernity is an “incomplete” project, according to Habermas, in the sense that society has ceased being rational. (Barry 85). There is a need to rediscover the “rational” society which critically debates. Also, as Clyde Miller pointed out in *The Process of Persuasion*, the consumer should learn to recognize the devices of the persuaders and should build up a “recognition reflex”. Such a recognition reflex, he said, can protect us against the trickery of persuaders operating in the commonplace affairs of everyday life...” (Packard 265).

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