

Abstract

In our fast growing economy, consumption is inevitable. Everywhere you go you are constantly being bombarded with print advertisements, television commercials, and billboards informing you about exceptional products that promise to make your life 'better' or make your life easier. On average, Americans consume around 5,000 advertisements a day. Logically, due to this constant bombardment of product ads a consumer's rate of consumption grows exponentially. Have you ever stopped to consider what attracts you to certain brands? Or how, what you consume, affects who you are and how others see you? This pilot study aimed to explore the mechanisms companies use in order to attract customers to their products. Additionally, the psychological effects the consumption of these products have on the consumer are also discussed. Finally, this study analyzed campaigns such as Apple's 'Get a Mac', and Victoria Secret's 'Perfect Body' campaign, in order to analyze the psychological effects these have on the consumer's self concept or individual identity.

Keywords: consumerism, advertisements, self-concept, identity

Introduction

2019, a year of constant connectivity, is truly redefining how we present ourselves to the world.

- No longer are people showcased through their personal attributes, but through the degree in which they consume and the brands they embody.

Advertising is everywhere, and how companies portray their products has evolved exponentially.

- No longer are companies focused on the utility of their product, but the labels they can instill within their products in order to make it more susceptible to their customers.

Literature Review

In our consumer scene, not only are brands highly concerned with the meanings consumers derive from their products, but the mechanisms they can use in order to foster the consumer's attachment to the product.

- "An individual's 'wants' are turned into 'needs' for commodities providing them with a fantasized image of their self" (Jhally, 2006).

While it is quite odd to believe products and brands carry personalities, in this recent consumer world it is not as far fetched as it seems.

- "Recently, brands have paid more attention to 'consumers' symbolic use of brands not only in their construction of group identities, but also the meanings they provide to everyday practices and meanings attached to personal self-images" (Askegaard, 2006).

Identity

In order to understand the link between individual identity and consumption, one must first understand what identity entails.

- "Identities are described as the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles and social group memberships that define who one is." (Oyserman, 2009).
- "Together, identities make up one's self-concept variously described as what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself" (Neisser, 1993).

Identities are the social labels that individuals take within a society which in turn help them classify themselves and influences the actions the individual partakes in the society.

- "The more positive, and more personally important, aspects of the self are likely to be based on which a person locates her or himself." (Simmon, Hastedt, 1999).

Analysis of Campaigns

For the purpose of this research a content analysis will be carried out on two commercial campaigns: Apple's "Get a Mac" campaign, and Victoria's "Perfect Body" campaign.

Apple's "Get a Mac" Campaign

- The campaign is assessed through the lens in which it is infused with the mechanisms of how companies believe customers should construct their individual identity and how that makes the customer question their identity.
- The mechanisms will be showcased, but the process in which Apple legitimizes the consumer's ideal self through a series of dichotomies and images in order to cause the viewer or customer to question their self identity and in turn change it to reflect the ideal identity the campaign proposes will also be showcased.

Victoria Secret's "Perfect Body" Campaign

- The campaign showcased a series of slender models wearing the new underwear line with the caption 'The Perfect Body' placed across the center of the image.
 - "The "Perfect Body" campaign is thought to promote low self esteem among women who are made to feel that their bodies are inadequate and unattractive because they do not fit into this narrow standard of beauty." (Akbareian, 2014)
- This study will analyze how the words and the series of images, as well as how the identity of the company, relates a message of self identity to the customer about body image and the ideal self identity they propose.

Proposal

In order to produce concrete findings a more in depth study should be executed.

- Should include a sizeable pool of diverse communication campaigns.
- The aim of this study should be to explore the mechanisms that companies use in order to propel their target audience to consume their products.
- Evaluate the effects that consuming certain brands over others have on the construction of an individual's self concept or individual identity.

Conclusion

Through the execution of a more in depth study expressed in the proposal of this paper, one hopes to gain concrete findings showcasing a direct link between advertising campaigns and a consumer's construction of self identity.

This will bring about change in the consumer culture.

- Increase consumer consciousness.
- Companies and corporations will have to continuously adapt at an even greater level to the population's desire.
- Provide the Communication field with an angle to which one perceives themselves and each other to create more meaningful relationships.



Example: Mac vs PC

Would you rather be happy, bubbly, and creative? Choose a Mac. Want to be boring, bland and miserable? Own a PC.

- As a result of this comparison, a consumer would obviously pick owning a Mac because they believe it will make them seem happier, more bubbly, and all around immensely creative.

This campaign creates uncertainty in the consumer's own skin, it also creates a need for the product due to the fact that the traits carried by the Mac user become the fantasized image or the example the consumer wants to portray to themselves and the people around them.

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