
Sex in advertising

Responding to this case study, Tom Reichert, author of the book: *Sex in Advertising: Perspective on the Erotic Appeal*, explains that "sex does not always sell, but sexiness does" (p. 55). The use of sex appeals in the advertising industry is a good way to target certain market segments, but it does not work with all of them. It has been a long time since the use of sexual appeals in advertising has been happening. Sex is everywhere. Sex appeal is categorized in several different distinctions. Reichert conducted a study in 2000 that revealed four characteristics of sexy ads: physical features of models, behavior/movement, intimacy between models, and contextual features such as camera effects. He tried to find what people consider sexy in advertising. Those who came up the most frequently were physical features (66%), the model's movements and verbal and nonverbal communication (39%), contextual features (26%), and proxemics (15%) (p.267-269). He noticed that what people referred to as sexy differed gender to gender. The study showed that females had a greater response than male 35% compared to 20% for men. In addition, it showed that 28% of the women responded to references to physical distance or interaction between models compared to 6% of the men (p.269).

Evaluating the audience who will be viewing the ads before invoking a sexual appeal into the ad is crucial. A recent study found that there is not an industry-wide plan that advertisers use men as voiceovers in ads. Rather, individual advertisers and agencies make decisions about specific products and ad executions. For instance, a spokesperson and an announcer's sex can affect advertising evaluations for a gender-specific product but not for non- gender imaged products (Whipple & McManamon p.87). The use of obvious sexual appeals in print advertising has increased considerably in contemporary advertising practice. Today, it is common for a reader of any age to pick up a general-interest consumer magazine and find an advertisement featuring provocatively posed and attired models for many consumer products (Henthorne & LaTour p.82). Since the beginning of the 21st century, the use of sexual appeals in print advertisement has become commonplace. Calvin Klein is one of the most memorable companies, which base their advertisement on sexual appeals. Their ads often feature a nudity within couples in a somewhat provocative position.

Also, many of the print advertisements for Calvin Klein jeans are just as suggestive and memorable. Ads of this type are designed to elicit what the originators hope is a vicarious experience of sensuality (p.82). "Advertising research reveals that sexual appeals are attention getting, arousing, affect inducing, and memorable" (Reichert, p.14). But, even though studies have demonstrated that sexual appeals attract attention to the ad, they do so without a corresponding advantage for brand information processing. Although using sexual appeals in

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brand advertisements has not proven to be as effective as it sounds or seems, using them in social marketing can be beneficial, but is not always. "From a social marketing perspective, sexual appeals may be beneficial for the simple reason that they are attention-getting and potentially motivating desirable message characteristics in a saturated media environment" (Reichert p.18).

An ethical concept that goes with this idea is Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. His approach focuses on the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves. So, as a Deontologist, a situation is considered good or bad depending on whether the action that brought it about was right or wrong. Looking at this situation, the use of sexual imagery in advertising is not wrong. It does not harm anyone in general, plus, since some people are more attracted to a certain product because of that, it can only bring more money to any company that is promoting itself with the use of sexuality in their ads. Both sex and sexuality sell, according to thebalance.com, the pornography industry has a yearly profit of 4.8 billion dollars either using sex or sexiness.

A recent study conducted by the University of Ohio in 2014 published in The Psychological Bulletin suggests that sex in advertising is a nuisance for the consumers. Psychology teacher Brad Bushman and the author Robert Lull who conducted this study have gathered data from 8489 participants by exposing them to ads that contain sexual content to see how they would respond to them. They concluded that the perception of ads that contain sexual appeals is less favorable than ads that do not. Brad Bushman added that "sex and violence in advertising are not great sellers. They can even harm the spectators, because they impair their memory, their perceptions, and their buying intentions [...] They, therefore, do not increase the effectiveness of an ad". (Pierrot, no page number)

Today, every media consumer is "exposed to sexual imagery in advertising. Sex's use and misuse is constantly before everyone and elicit strong criticism" (Richmond & Hartman p.53). As anyone can notice, the use of sex in the media has been happening for several decades and the reason for it is simply because it works. Advertisements that are "naturally sexy" tend to be remembered more often than ads that are not. Regarding this fact, the question arising is how ethical is it to use sex appeals in advertisements.

In other words, should sex be used as a tool for advertisement? Advertising draws people in and them into buying things based on how the ads make them feel. It is not always fair to assume that everyone knows what the advertisers are doing. This paper will discuss whether sex sells by defining it at first, when and where sexual appeals are used in ads, who is the primary focus in advertising, and the ethical dilemma of using appeals in advertising. But to be more concise about the subject, this paper will be firstly looking at a case study.

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