The influence of digital advertising on the current generation

Digital Advertising materials and there negative effects

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Abstract

Marketing contributes to the influence of the generation in the 21st century. The aim of the advertising agencies, which are a part of the marketing industry, is to make the advertised product a success no matter what consequences it has for the audience. The advertising agencies developed great photo manipulation software's, which shaped the industry over years. The history of the development of the portrayal of women in mass media led to the changes in social norms and social standards. The changes of the body image in advertisements are mainly due to the growth of the photo manipulation business. The advertisement companies influence the young females to an extent, which changes their own self-evaluation and behavioural outcomes. The influence of digital advertising on the current generation creates increasing negative effects that need to be removed or altered in order to reach business goals without negatively effecting the generation around us.

Introduction

The topic of the social comparison theory has been analysed and discussed for centuries. This theory states that "We seek to compare ourselves to others we believe are similar to ourselves, particularly to determine our own levels of abilities and successes" (Bessenoff, 2006). The problems arise when the influences of advertising media and their impact are brought up. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the effects of people surrounded by the advertising media.

Looking at the influences of advertising materials, and their development over the years is the main mission of the paper. The history of the development of the portrayal of women in mass media brings up the patterns of positive and negative presentations of their body image, which leads to the current approaches.

Media manipulation is done by simple or very complex techniques, in order to create the perfect image to satisfy the consumers' wants and needs. All types of advertisements for the wide public eye want to have success, and therefore they need to reach their audience. In order to persuade the consumers, actions by the advertisement companies are taken with no regard on the consequences they have on people. The bigger the value of a product or service, the more engaging and eye-catching the advertisement has to be; therefore, the manipulation of the image is very important. Influencing the audience is a great tool to make a profit; therefore, the images that are most striking are usually the ones to make the most profit.

This is why companies often ignore what is ethical in business and what is not. Ethics in marketing have always been an issue as nobody can clearly define what is right or wrong. A lack of regard towards ethical advertising can often lead to drastic problems as females may develop eating disorders, psychological issues or may turn to substance abuse. The strong desire of every human being able to fit in is caused by the manipulation of media. It is therefore important to prove what is more appealing to the consumer and will cause a less negative image to the public.

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1   The development of portrayal of women and men in mass media

1.1   The approaches and influences of the marketing generation

The standards of body image always had a strong social impact on women and men in their everyday lives. People today are constantly surrounded with advertising and images, which dictates what should be the ideal image of perfect body image. In the society today, however, women hardly dictate what is beautiful and what is not. In most cases, the media does all beauty and style decision. If the covers of all women and men magazines are filled with images of tall, thin yet fit bodies of tanned women and men which appear in movies, television, advertisement and commercials for a long time, the society will eventually accept it as the norm and feel pressured to live up to such expectations. (Dissatisfaction with Our Bodies and Eating Disorders, n.d.).

In todays generations Photoshop rules the mass media and models and products can be adjusted in a few seconds on a computer based on the needs of the companies. While in the early years, the effect of mass media on body image had been largely ignored and even despite many concerns and complaints on the industry, the topic was very much ignored and unspoken of. However, with so many studies, which display the intensive effects these images have on female teens, more and more people are trying to increase awareness of this issue and do something about it. The most extreme example is a law proposed in France. It was well know that the average sizes of models in France were often very extreme compared to other countries. Not only were the models very thin, but the images were also edited before printing. Teens viewing this in mass media would need to go to extreme measures to achieve such bodies, and therefore the French government decided to put forward a law, which would stop the media from producing such images (Swinson, 2011). This law threatened to give fines up to $80,000 to agencies who did not adopt it. The law also demands that if the agency decides to edit the pictures of models to appear slimmer, they may do so but must provide a caption saying, "retouched photograph" next to it. Whether such precautions will have a big impact is hard to say, however, it certainly highlights how much of an effect the mass media has on young females and males, and how this issue has been brought to the forefront, forcing governments in many countries such as France, Spain, Italy and others to deal with this issues (Swinson, 2011). Therefore one-sided arguments, which in most cases can have very deep consequences on the public, are not an issue if the company sells their product. Therefore the images that are most striking are usually the ones to make the most profit (Tiggemann, 2009).

144 Australian University students from ages 18 to 29 all participated in research to see whether reading or looking through magazines for 2 hours a day affects them. The viewing of product images in advertisements potentially have strong social influences given that these females read 0.57 magazines per month. As the media have been marked as the most powerful and persuasive industry to persuade the public, viewing images in magazines can have positive influences that motivate females to socially compare themselves. Looking thin has many positive outcomes in the psychological point of view such as confidence, happiness and having attention. Reports show the females buy fashion magazines for entertainment, self improvement, motivational factors, tips on style, inspirations, grooming, social learning, behaviours, and lastly to compare themselves, when females were asked why they read fashion magazines the most frequent answer was for self-improvement and motivation. The problem arises when females engage into a fantasy where they believe they should be thinner and as attractive as the magazine pictures. This is a result of media encouragement, which is followed by inorganic emotions in females. The research points out that social comparison condition produced more body dissatisfaction and negative moods then the fantasy condition (Tiggemann, 2009).

1.2   The norms of the marketing generation

Internalization of beauty standards leads to negative effects, especially dissatisfaction of females and males about themselves. Here we define internalized as "the process of internalization of beauty ideals refers to the extent to which an individual regards to social norms of size and appearance as appropriate standards for her own appearance" (Rollero, 2015). As the world is slowly becoming smaller with globalization, we are beginning to abandon to these core values and begin to accept one unified image of beauty, which is in many cases solely dictated by the media. The media uniformly idealize all female and male icons just to fit the standards. These standards show the mass public which body attributes are important, and how important they are depression; body shame, anxiety, lower-self esteem and eating disorders are the real problems the media has on females. (Rollero, 2015).

A group of 151 female undergraduates, with an age average of 21.27, ranging from 19 to 26 was taken. The average body mass index was 20.51%, which is lower than the average norm of 22%. They were told that this study was to give them results how effective are marketing techniques to avoid biased results. The females were given 1 of 3 images, either one that was retouched, one that was not or one that emphasized retouching. Those that viewed the image where the retouching was emphasized were notified that the image was digitally altered. According to the results internalization showed an outcome of many negative effects internalization was negatively related to attractiveness and self-esteem. Only the emphasis retouching and warning people the image has been retouched can reduce the level of internalization, which results in lower negatives effects on the females, when they get to know that images have been retouched they reduce there own beauty standards. Internalization should reduce both social and self-esteem issues. Women who viewed photo-shopped images, which included warning labels on them about being retouched, had a much lower impact of their body dissatisfaction. Emphasized retouching would surly decrease the level of internalization. No relationship was found between internalization of positive effects in the emphasized retouching. However, "the level of internalization of media standards should not be considered as an individual unchangeable trait" some countries showed decreasing internalization and positive numbers showed up concerning the consequences" (Rollero, 2015).

2 Ethics in digital advertising

2.1 Image manipulation

It is acceptable to change images with ease on every computer in this time period. A small number of airbrush techniques have become a routine in the advertising industry. Photos, ranging from retouched to heavily edited, are contained in almost every magazine. The easily accessible software's and tools made the products meet the needs of the "ideals" and create perfection. This issue of photography manipulation looks at unrealistic images where the people are exposed to unreal body images or products, which does not exist. (Body Image – Photo Manipulation, n.d.)

2.2 The effects of modern marketing

The use of psychology in advertising and the lack of ethics in marketing is an important factor in the digital era we live in. People are well aware of how the average person is affected today by advertising and will use any tactic in order to sell their products. Even if this means shaming people into feeling guilty for eating and creating standards to which young people feel they have to live up to. Even though most people will say they do not pay attention to commercials in the television, however, today it has become almost impossible to escape the influence of modern marketing. There are so many means in which consumers can be reached. For example in the US, an average person is exposed to 250 billion hours of watching television every year. Out of this time around 30% consists of advertising. These add up to around 20,000 television commercials per years, which Is on average 3000 commercials per day. This is a very high number considering that television is not the only one out of the many ways from which young teens come in contact with advertising (The Media And Body Image, n.d.). The effect of advertising in America shows that, 50% of three- to six-year-old girls are concerned about their weight (Kilbourne, 2015). Therefore, the main problem is the lack of ethics in the advertising industry. Businesses are well aware of the power that digital image manipulation has over their consumers and use it to their full advantage in order to sell their products. As John Galbraith said in his book "The Affluent Society", today the demand is no longer created by the consumers, but by the advertisers themselves (Galbraith, 1998.). Through manipulation they create a psychological desire without the knowledge of the consumer. Therefore, with the amount of images of the "perfect body", young teens will often fail to rationally consider whether what is being marketed to them is in their best interest.

3 Consequences of digital marketing

The positioning concept indicated how marketers want the consumer to perceive the advertisement or the brand (Cravens, 2013). It is very important to choose the right business and marketing strategy in order to satisfy the client and the consumer. The advertisement companies do not focus on the consequences of their decisions and therefore all people get very influenced from what they view on a daily basis.

The consumer's requirements should focus on the advertisements functional, symbolic or experimental concept (Cravens, 2013). In this case the symbolic positioning relates to the consumers internally generated need of self-enhancement or ego-identification. Meaning that advertisement companies aim their advertisements to be appealing and very attractive to the potential consumers. The appeal that is strategically aimed at consumers makes them want to relate to what the advertisement companies determine to be "perfect" and therefore serious consequences arise.

The ever-growing debate about the influence of advertising materials on the body image of females and ales is now one of the main issues discussed in many countries. Many people who work in the industry argue that the magazines make no secret about the fact that they edit the images they use and that it is only done for the best result effect in the magazines. Many people say they do not really see the harm in editing pictures in media. In fact most images are most likely edited, not only those of people, but anything used in advertising. The goal is to produce the most visually attractive image for people to buy the product. This way the whole issue seems harmless and unimportant. However, the evidence to show that these practices in fat have a very negative effect is undeniable. And in this case we are not plainly talking about poor self-image among young girls and boys, or bullying at schools. We are talking about extreme cases where such actions can lead to dangerous actions, which can lead to serious psychological problems or even acts of self-harm. Eating disorders, bulimia, anorexia, opting to unnecessary plastic surgery and many psychological issues such as depression, shame, stress, guilt, insecurity and body dissatisfaction. The teens see their body as a problem even when there is none. Because this is such a common thing in the world today and many young teens are developing eating disorders without the people around them even noticing and so many people undergo plastic surgery, people become immune to such stories and forget about how dangerous this truly is. Therefore, it is important to look at all the serious consequences that the influence of advertising materials have on the people, and how dangerous they may be (Cravens, 2013).

4 Conclusion

The history of advertising companies shows a change of portrayals of products and models in the mass media. The advertising business surrounds consumers on a daily basis. This fast that the growing industry with a "Global advertising expenditure for 2013 with an estimate of 448 billion dollars. With the greatest growth being shown in the Asia pacific region, central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America"(Cravens, 2013) points out how largely it affects all the consumers. Beauty, fashion and product advertisements impacts and shapes the development of the females and males. Values and believes have been altered and drive the girls and boys to be unhappy with themselves especially there bodies. Body dissatisfaction and the mass media have a positive correlation/direct relationship, which shows the pressure amounts to be thin. The tendency of social comparison in teenagers is shaped by the "ideals" the mass media present, where the media can become an "addiction" which pulls them in. The media's control over lives of millions of girls and boys is a reflection of the modern life. Many time models that are extremely skinny are often not healthy and many of their features are enhanced digitally. This is however, rarely communicated to the consumer. Therefore, this image used in marketing slowly becomes the norm or standard of how women and men should look despite the fact that in reality very few women and men meet the actual standard of slimness or beauty depicted in advertising.

It is important for all women and men to understand, that a females and males self-image shape's them into the women and men they really are. Every human being is unique due to different physical traits and altering personal features would change every girl's and boy's individuality. The ever-growing debate about the influence of advertising materials on the body image of young females and males is now one of the main issues discussed in many countries. The medias influence is becoming a bigger danger every single day. Especially in places like the US, where manipulated images have almost become a part of the media culture and any other non-retouched images can hardly be seen in the media. People argue over whether it is ethical to portray such images without special warning about how they are being altered and some people are discussing whether legal action should be taken in order to stop this practice.

The body images on advertisements present the thin ideal thanks to the development of photography manipulation software's. The unrealistically thin models change the social norms into unrealistic measures. These norms influence the females and males to an extend where the psychological pressure on females and males will have many negative effects, which can be potentially dangerous whether psychologically or on their health. Since the body shape of every individual differs, there may be large contrasts between the ideal image of a perfect body and that of a real person. This will lead to body image distortions, which may lead to extreme dieting or exercising in excess. While the idea of dieting or exercising is not in itself harmful and may lead to positive results, often times, women and men with a particular body shape will not accomplish the advertised body image by such means and continue to pursuit this image leading to eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. Females and males at the ages from 15 to 25 are much more vulnerable to the media as they are at an age where they are struggling with their own identity and self-image, such feelings may often develop over time into dangerous habits. According to York (2012) it is important for all females and males to differentiate fact from fiction in advertisements, because if consumers would appreciate advertisements for what they truly are, problems such as eating disorders or substance abuse would decline.

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