

# Sexualisation in Advertisements

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**Abstract:** *There is a belief that a product will entice minimal audience attention if it advertises lack of features of sex. This ranges from negatively explicit display of sexual acts, to the use of basic cosmetics to enhance beauty and attractive features. A company uses advertisements in order to inveigle people to buy the products being advertised. These persuasive and irresistible messages try convincing the potential consumers or users to choose their products instead of others. The active use of images of youths, especially females, in advertising without connection to the product being sold has become a trend in advertising. This study shows and investigates how sex sell products. The effectiveness of sex advertising depends on the type of products as well as the strength of its demand among other competitors in the similar market or industry.*

Keywords: Advertising, brand, consumerism, sexual, sales

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## 1. Introduction

Advertisements and messages from advertisers are everywhere. Companies use them to promote their products to the public. Advertisements commonly include the brand, the product or service, and how the product or service could be beneficial to entice consumers or what would be an unfavourable outcome of using a particular good sold. Besides using strategies to persuade consumers in multiple ways, advertisements also act as a means to communicate ideas, messages or information to random or targeted individuals. Caution has been thrown to the winds as regards decency in advertising appeals, in the society that we live in today. Even without any connection to the product being sold, nude images of pretty women often appear in adverts.

In order for companies to be successful at delivering their promotional messages to the public, they must be strategic on how they communicate their message. However, advertisements must be remembered and able to leave a good impression for them to have an effective impact on consumers. Sex has been utilized in advertising since its beginning. It ranges from the use of women face to the exposure of certain parts of the body which is explicitly provocative. Advertisers simply believe that products gain public attention as well as patronage when sexual appeals are used. There is a general notion among advertisers that “nudity sells” and this informs the rate at which various sex appealing images have been employed in advertising.

Adverts feature provocative images of well-defined women and men, in revealing outfits and postures selling clothing, alcohol, beauty products, fragrances and a lot more stuff. For instance, advertisers as Calvin Klein, Victoria’s Secret and Pepsi use these images to

cultivate a ubiquitous sex-tinged media presence. Also, sexual information is used to promote the advert to appeal to people's emotion.

## **2. Literature Reviews**

Jacobson (1995) stated that sexual images have been a staple of advertising since the very birth of the industry. Women's faces and bodies adorned Coca-Cola calendars back in the 1980s and have been employed to sell virtually everything since then. But in the recent decades, sexual imagery in advertising has become more common, more explicit, more exploitative and more violent.

One of the most straightforward ways to operationalize a sexual appeal is to vary the amount of clothing that a model or models wear in an ad. Soley and Reid (1988) proposed a typology to categorize nudity in ads that has been used frequently as the basis for developing experimental stimuli. The four categories of the typology are demure (e.g. 'everyday dress'), suggestive (e.g. mini-skirts, short shorts), partially clad (e.g. bathing suits, lingerie), and nude (e.g. models who are wearing only a towel, silhouettes of nude models, models without any clothes),

Ifezue, A.N (2010, p.16) pointed out that "sex appeal as an advertising strategy is well adopted in both Western and European countries as advertisers attempt to find ways to break through the media clutter but there is no guarantee that it will be effective globally."

Price (2002, p.14) claimed that sex appeal has become one of the most popular and effective tactics in mainstream consumer advertising in most of the Western countries such as the United States. This goes to show that the extent of exposure of sex images in advertising is relative to countries based on what the people accept as a norm.

## **3. Discussion**

Today in this era, advertisers have made consumers to view sex as a commodity hence, the patronage given to a product whose advertising contents are sexually appealing is believed to be for the sexual content and not for the product. This is a form of deception in advertising which is against the codes of advertising practice. Instead of making more thoughtful arguments on behalf of their products, marketers essentially use a cheap trick with the use of women's bodies in their advertisements. The reason being is attractive bodies are employed to grab attention and stimulate or create desire, which advertisers wish will eventually be transferred to the product. Slogans like "buy the beer, get the girl" is used to achieve this. Marketers present women's bodies as the rewards of consumption. Such ads unpleasantly affect women by giving them unrealistic notion of what they should look like if they want to get men's attention.

Media is responsible for a major cultivating and acculturating process which are exposed systematically to a selective view of society on almost every aspect of life, a view which tends to shape their belief and values accordingly. People easily memorize slogans and absorb images as well as acquire language they see or hear on media platforms without questioning them. They do it without even thinking. Therefore, advertisers take the advantage to use images of women as attention grabbing aid in presenting their products knowing that when these prospective consumers memorize these images and it's attending values it will for a favourable attitude for the product.

Advertising effectiveness depends critically upon consumers' memory performance at the time of the purchase. Marketing strategies mostly explore the placement of advertising retrieval cues that is originally contained in advertisements, which acts to assist in consumer's memory during their purchasing intent. Advertising effects and information retained from a promotional message are, usually, processed and stores in a person's long term memory after the exposure of some advertisement. Many advertisements do depict women with either alluring behaviour or exposing some or majority of their bodies, which contributes to the consumers' ability to remember the ads. This is why at times; sexualisation in advertisements can distract the focus away from the actual product, leading to only remembering the model rather than the product itself. Advertisers seek to conceive advertisements that are memorable, likeable and likely to influence purchase decision. They assume that the use of sexy models in promotional messages is what appeals to countless individuals due to how the model is portrayed.

People around the world with different cultures and lifestyles act differently towards the use of sexual elements in advertisements. Advertisers need to explore how their targeted consumers from the other parts of the world, beside where they are living in, might respond to the same particular sex appeal advertising strategies they are using. Overly blatant application of sex as an attention grabber can be counterproductive. A lot of studies, including a study by Garrett (1993) have found that males are most sexually aroused when presented with nude images or suggested sources. This is the reason why most sexual ads use the image of women, instead of men. It leads to the increasing rate of sexual harassment as there are numerous cases of rape and other forms of sexual assaults as a result of disparity in response to sexual appeals in advertising, specifically between employers and employees and even in the entertainment industry.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Generally, understanding the complexities of advertisements and the effective persuasive 'tactics' used to entice consumers is very difficult. Source, message and audience are the several categories of information that must be considered for effective advertising. The source of information must be trustworthy, the information must be provided to them by an expert that is within the domain of the speaker's message. The message does not necessarily have to contain sexual images or values but it has to contain an emotional component to elicit a response of concern in order to persuade consumers to take action right away.

There is no ethical basis for which advertisers should use nude images of women or girls as sex appeal. This is because it degrades and devalues the female gender in the minds of individual in the society. It undoubtedly makes some girls to see themselves as sex objects thereby leading to the practice of all forms of illicit sexual behaviours. These behaviours are the results of constant exposure to nude pictures used in advertising which carries with it certain values and attitudes towards sex that are sold to consumers. The sex images normally succeed in actually taking the attention of the potential consumers away from the product being advertised to the image of sex objectified in the advert. People are attracted to sex appeals in advertising not because they like the product, but that they derive pleasure in seeing nudity that is going on, which explains that emotional attachment is given to the nude images rather than the product. Cultural backgrounds of individuals who are exposed to these sex images have a role to play in the kind of effect it has on them. Gender as well is another key determining factor on the effect of sex appeal in advertising.

In conclusion, if a brand's goal is to create awareness of a product, then sexual appeals offer an advantage, as long as the product that is being advertised fits into the audience expectations. This also means that ads that go against expectations actually will be less effective. If a brand's goal is reinforcing its position, then sexual appeals offer no advantage or disadvantage. However, it is found that overly used of nudity in advertising is most likely to arouse males' sexual activities which lead to sexual harassment, rape and various degrees of sexual assaults and cases as witnessed in the society around the world today.

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