

MEDIA AND ADVERTISING





The Perfect Storm

The capitalist revolution brought unintended consequences throughout various areas of society. Through contemplated debates and wars over the best approach that would sustain civilization, capitalism was shown to be the winner. The innate desires of people and their natural greed to pursue more than the limited division of goods and services by socialist societies showed that other means of society had no creditworthiness. People will naturally want more, and therefore, the best way to regulate humans' desires is to create a system, capitalism, that allows them to pursue business with limited regulation. The introduction of limitless consumerism as a result created the Advertising industries, which meant to justify and spread the means of capitalism. Advertising and the Media have occupied society by reinforcing the goals of capitalism through imagery that suggests emotional response and influence directly to our identity. In this paper, I will describe the values that are associated with advertising. I will dissect Media's Five Core Concepts and then apply two contemporary

media examples to show how the Advertising industry values are still sustained today.

In the film, "Advertising and the Perfect Storm" by Sut Jhally, Jhally explains how the Advertising Industry started, its effects on consumerism, and how advertising values are intricately linked to the human condition. For example, Jhally explains, "Our entire media system is a delivery system for marketers - its prime function is to deliver us to audiences." This means that all editorial content is designed to get us to look at something. Programs work so that the ads can work the way they do and create an effect which results in the purchase of a specific product. This can be seen through product placement in film, movie theaters, sports stadiums, and commercials. As product placement and media have shown their relevance in advertising, the increased advertising over the internet has also become apparent.

Jhally also differentiates the means of a capitalist production society versus a capitalist consumer

society. No other society can produce as many goods or services compared to a capitalist production society. The endless productivity and goods produced influences the way America presents itself on the global stage and prevents a global world order based on its interaction with other capitalist and free-trade societies.

Also, Jhally explains how Karl Marx's analyst of Capitalism provided the foundation of understanding why capitalism exists and the facts to rejecting feudalism. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx explains "All that is solid melts into air." In this regard, it is difficult to discern whether Marx was either the greatest fan or worst critic of capitalism. Marx shows that capitalism "never stands still and always needs to grow." In the famous opening line, Marx says, "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an immense collection of commodities." The measurable proportion shows that though the production dilemma has been solved, the result is the dilemma of consumerism and how to



CONSUMERISM

ensure consumerism persists. Therefore, it is not enough to just produce commodities, but they must be sold through the course of distribution so that a profit can be returned in money form. Without the circular process which involves investment in labor, materials and converts back to money in which a profit is returned, the system will collapse into a depression.

Therefore, Jhally's lecture showcases the foundation of advertising as a means to an end: the goal is to ensure the status quo of a capitalist rule persists so that people will continue to spend and consume. The new institution, the advertising industry, requires the best creative talent of society to answer abstract challenges: How do you communicate in an environment where people don't want to be communicated to? The function of this new industry is to create a culture in which desire and identity is merged with commodities. In Marx terms, the "fetish of commodities", will help make the lifeless world of goods come alive with real possibilities. The advertising industry spends more than on television programming themselves, resulting in over \$200 billion annually, not accounting for PR or the Media, and \$400 billion globally. Jhally argues there has never been an effort compared

to the advertising effort than any other campaign to change awareness, with the exception of religion. Advertising messages produce more than 10x the programs themselves.

Advertising influences a message that suggests people need to afford certain items to become the better version of themselves. The messages offer a very consistent set of stories that tell how people should live. The questions that arise include: what are the values of advertising? What is the morality of advertising and what stories does it tell us? In this regard, advertising tells a very basic set of stories that are formulated in the idea of happiness and how individuals can feel good. Advertising uses storytelling and relatable experiences to showcase their product that makes the products a visual representation of how life ought to be. People's desire is to be happy therefore is solved through the payoff of specific goods.

The marketplace is where people should find the most satisfaction because the messaging suggests that it is better to buy than not to buy. We are asked to have relationships with objects. We also justify the use of more goods due to the economic argument which suggests that more

goods equates with more jobs, and more jobs equals more opportunity to purchase potential, which means that purchase potential links to happiness potential. So, the moral premise of consumerism is that consumerism is related to the greater good. However, Jhally also shows that when examined culturally and historically, there is a weak link between economic growth and happiness, as shown in surveys in 1945. The market is good at pushing us towards things that are bought and sold, but Jhally argues that social relationships, the real source of happiness, cannot be sourced from consumerism.

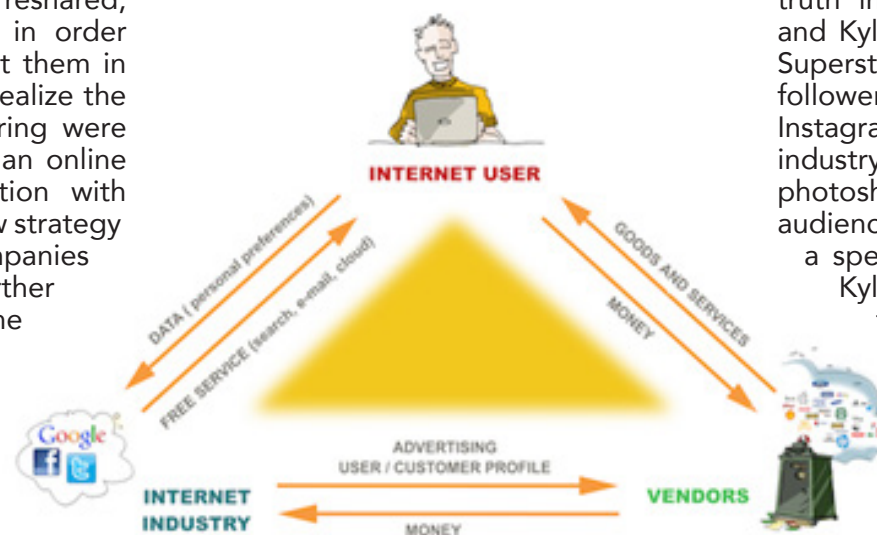
Therefore, the values I will focus on will be media literacy and photographic truth seen through advertising. According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education, media literacy refers to all electronic or digital means and print or artistic visuals used to transmit messages. "Literacy is the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages. Media literacy is the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages. Media education is the study of media, including 'hands on' experiences and media production. Media

literacy education is the educational field dedicated to teaching the skills associated with media literacy.”

Media literacy had a direct impact on the 2016 Presidential election and influenced data collection partners to target specific audiences throughout different campaigns. As new evidence showed that Russian interference through social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter resulted in planting specific fake-news sources, images, memes, and other posting techniques to influence people’s perception on the candidates, it became quite apparent that people’s media literacy and ability to interpret which news is verified and true became the driving force towards what behaviors would be met come election time to determine who would become the next president. As a result, data collection companies such as Cambridge Analytica were able to capture the data regarding people’s behavior on social media: items were reshared, “liked”, and communicated with in order to determine how to better target them in the future. Though people didn’t realize the items they were liking and resharing were fake news items brought by Russian online trolls and hackers, their interaction with these fake news items caused a new strategy of advertising technology for companies such as Cambridge Analytica to further manipulate future campaigns. The graphic to the right details exactly how the transaction occurred.

For example, “Once in Cambridge Analytica’s hands, the data of 30 million users (out of the original 50 million) was matched

with other records to build personality profiles on millions of American voters. Cambridge Analytica classified voters using five personality traits known as OCEAN – Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. The aim was to identify the personalities of American voters and influence their behavior, using psychographic modelling techniques.” (Digital Watch) Cambridge Analytica were so successful at their role in targeting specific audiences during campaign season due to their ability to attract specific personality traits that were claimed through Facebook profiles. The repetitive relationship between the internet user, vendors, and advertising shows that vendors can manipulate how users will behave in greater society by providing a product that resonates with their unreal goals such as happiness, freedom, and power.



The varied relationship between social media and advertising has become a power dynamic in modern day advertising. In 2017, Facebook’s advertising revenues were close to \$40 billion; that same year Google’s revenues from advertising reached over \$27 billion. (Digital Watch) Though industries have the ability to define business models and campaign strategies based on user data through unorthodox and unethical means, most importantly, the foundation of this funnel should be seen by the normal citizens who interact with the social media platforms. The power of Cambridge Analytica wouldn’t exist if people didn’t interact with the platforms to begin with. So, most importantly, people’s media literacy and ability to recognize an objective truth compared to an invented story will be one of the most impactful skills to learn in the 21st century.

The second value I will describe and incorporate is the approach of photographic truth in the media. Kim Kardashian West and Kylie Jenner, for example, a Reality TV Superstar and beauty mogul, with combined followers of over 300 million followers on Instagram, are direct influencers of the beauty industry through the usage of storytelling, photoshop, and emotionally connecting its audience by providing “hope” of achieving a specific beauty standard. For example, Kylie Jenner’s tabloid story erupted in the media regarding her usage of lip injections in early 2014. Once seen as a Hollywood story later became her advertising tool to sell her Lip Kit products, thereby causing her to be one of the youngest “self-made” billionaires. Using social media as her main source

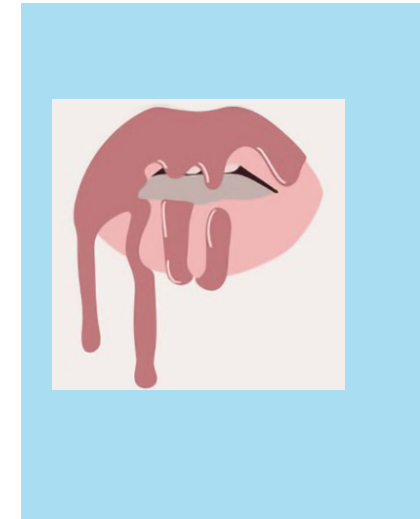
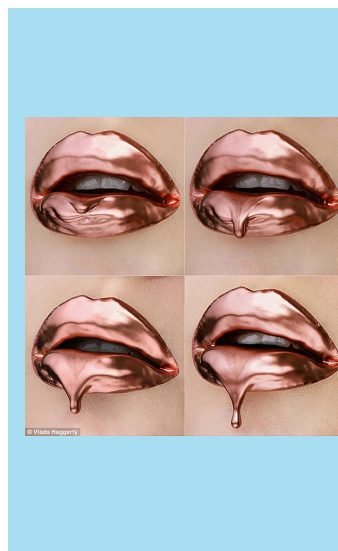
LIP KIT BY KYLIE JENNER

of advertising, Jenner showcased her lips in her product line and used the prior negative media attention about her injections into a means of happiness for her audience. By purchasing her Lip Kit, she showed that “we too” could also achieve the beauty she had created for herself. By manipulating photographic truth to suggest that her beauty was completely natural, Jenner became the world’s youngest billionaire.

The Kylie Lip Kit brand was formulated by the concept of beauty and scarcity which caused Jenner fans to believe they too could feel “special” because they own such a rare item. In 2016, Jenner’s first Lip Kit release sold out within minutes, and the first release was a test to see if it would do well. The scarcity of the Lip Kit drove fans into a frenzy, and soon, the Lip Kit increased in value tenfold. “...There are lots of substitutes if you want your lips to look a certain color, the problem is people aren’t buying functionality, they are buying desirability,” Z. John Zhang, a professor of marketing at the Wharton School, told FORBES. “You can keep up with the Kardashians and that kind of feeling is worth more than what goes into the lipstick.” (Forbes, 2016) Jenner’s ability to sell on scarcity causes her audience to believe that her items are rare and one of a kind. The ability to brand this way will provide true value to the product because the audience

believes the product will bring the same value to them.

The main backer to the “scarcity” advertising strategy lies within Jenner’s ability to create an aesthetic that is visually appealing and desirable through the manipulation of photographic truth. Jenner causes her audience to believe that the way she looks on social media and online is authentic, but in reality, is a manufactured image to create a beauty ideal that she can profit from. Jenner, the youngest of the Kardashian-Jenner clan, grew up in the spotlight her entire life and was once viewed as the “child” compared to her sisters. During her teen years, Jenner became the target of tabloid drama in which the stories would normally destroy a person’s career. However, Jenner utilized the negative storytelling to her advantage and paired her newly developed sex appeal on social media to create a brand that promoted a fierce, scarce, and desirable persona. The once “childlike” imagery of her past was now traded in for near nude sexual mystery, and the imagery utilized bust implants and new facial fillers that would become the sensation for beauty goals. As a result of the new media attention, Jenner manipulated photographic truth to create a new form of ideal beauty that can only be bought with surgery, makeup, and of course – purchasing her makeup line.





The Center for Media Literacy shows Five Core Concepts which include: All media messages are constructed, Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules, Different people experience the same media message differently, Media have embedded values and points of view, and most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. In relation to Jhally's assertions and value assessment in his lecture, I argue that these concepts are relevant in the media in 2019.

For example, media messages are constructed due to their natural goal to create a desirable outcome. The nature of media messaging is storytelling, and in the storytelling, the goal is to resonate with its audience so that they will choose a specific action. In this regard, "inaction" is also a form of action, and therefore, regardless of the outcome, media messages can sway its audience to act or not act on a particular idea. Messages are created and seen through film, imagery, or writing, and are meant to bring out an emotional sentiment that will drive specific behavior that can be measured through purchasing goods and services, activism, and more.

The second core concept explains that media

uses a creative language with its own rules. This can be seen through different platforms of media. The usage of lighting, editing, and aesthetic will present a completely different message than the ability to craft a short story in a newspaper. As various media forms rely on different sensory tactics to suggest a particular meaning, the creative language will best be suited to deliver its message. For example, a contemporary example can be seen through the usage of memes on social media. They are meant to be simple images with limited characters that are usually meant to be funny and the punchline of a specific joke or message. YouTube videos and commercials rely more on the storyline structure which requires character development, inciting incident, climax, and resolution. The different segment of the creative languages found within media messaging will therefore recall an emotional affect towards the item being advertised and will create an emotional experience that will be remembered in the future.

People will experience different reactions to the media and its imagery due to their varied lived experiences. Our personalities are shaped by our upbringing, values, and

subjective experiences. Though an objective reality exists, our perception of the reality will vary, so our perception of the media will vary. An example would be a person who grows up in a politically conservative and religious household will likely view images of the LGBTQ community differently than those who were raised in a secular or liberal environment. The human experience is not a fixed and predictable path, and then, our perceptions of the media won't be either. Our subjective relation to the media will then create inconsistency among the greater audience due to the conflicting nature of what should be considered good versus bad.

All media messages are constructed with the intent to display a specific value which will basically result in its audience pursuing a specific behavior. Values are inserted in the media that are meant to resonate with its audience. The media will mirror values that are experienced in everyday life in hopes of achieving a message that is relatable and true. If the media can create a dimension or reality in which it can garner trust from its audience, then it will be more likely to shape its behavior in a way that serves its capitalist needs.

MEDIA MESSAGES



Media messages are considered aspects of the advertising industry because their expected to serve a company's mission to yield profit. If the intent wasn't to yield some sort of profit, the media would just be considered art. The purpose of advertising is to develop and attract a message that resonates with the company's audience so that the company and product can continue to exist. Without the communication on behalf of the company, people wouldn't know that a particular product exists, and the company would no longer exist. Advertising allows the company's message to be distributed to the masses in hopes that a profit will be yielded. From the company's perspective, a good advertising campaign will turn first time buyer's into life-time buyers so that the company can continue to exist. Advertising is the epitome of capitalism because it shows no barriers or regulation to storytelling and requires trial and error to determine which strategies would be met with the most success. The human condition is naturally conditioned to survive from self-esteem, validation, and survival and great advertising

will persuade its audience to believe that it can fulfill these needs.

Therefore, I have shown how Jhally's argument about the values within advertising are still present in contemporary society. The capitalist society requires a world in which people will "buy" rather than "not buy" in order for it to be sustained, and therefore, advertising is the foundation for the status quo to exist. Using examples from Cambridge Analytica and the Kylie Jenner Lip Kit, I have also shown that media literacy and photographic truth will influence people to behave based on their perceptions of reality, and when proper attention isn't used, audiences can be manipulated to behave in harmony with the company's goals. Lastly, the five core concepts reveal that the human condition is fragile and reliant on sustaining an ego, and through the approach of using advertising as a means to create stories that resonate with its audience, people will continue to purchase goods based on how their reality aligns with the advertising message.

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