

A Typology of Femininity in Advertising Discourse: Cultural Representations of Females in Ads

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Abstract

This article presents a typology of femininity in advertising discourse, examining the impact of advertising on women's self-esteem and body image, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and ethical considerations. The linguistic features used in ads targeting women are analyzed, with examples of phrases creating unrealistic expectations for women. Studies on exposure to advertisements portraying unrealistic beauty standards are discussed, highlighting the negative impact on body image and self-esteem. The reinforcement of traditional roles and language emphasizing femininity and domesticity perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. Advertisers have a responsibility to promote positive societal norms and values, including promoting positive body image and gender equality. Responsible advertising practices can contribute to a more equitable and just society.

Keywords: advertising discourse, gender stereotypes, body image, unrealistic beauty standards.

Introduction

Advertising is a form of communication that aims to promote products and services to potential customers. It is a powerful tool that can influence consumer behavior and shape societal norms and values. Ads targeting women often use specific linguistic features that emphasize physical appearance, femininity, and domesticity. However, exposure to such ads can have negative impacts on women's self-esteem and body image, as well as reinforce gender stereotypes. Ethical considerations arise when advertisers perpetuate harmful societal norms and values through their messaging. Studies have shown that exposure to advertisements portraying unrealistic beauty standards can lead to decreased self-esteem and body dissatisfaction among women (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). The language used in ads that emphasizes physical appearance can also contribute to an increased focus on appearance and dissatisfaction with one's own body (Bessenoff, 2006). For example, phrases such as "perfect skin" or "flawless complexion" create unrealistic expectations for women and can contribute to feelings of inadequacy.

Ads targeting women often portray traditional roles such as homemakers or caregivers, perpetuating gender stereotypes (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971). The

language used in these ads emphasizes femininity and domesticity, reinforcing the idea that women should prioritize their roles as wives and mothers (Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010). For example, ads featuring women performing household chores such as cooking or cleaning reinforce the stereotype that women are responsible for domestic duties. Advertisers have a responsibility to promote positive societal norms and values and avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Harmful societal norms and values perpetuated by ads include the idea that women should prioritize their physical appearance over other aspects of their lives (Nabi & Sullivan, 2001). This can lead to negative impacts on body image and self-esteem. Advertisers should strive to promote positive body image and gender equality through their messaging. Advertisers have a responsibility to promote positive societal norms and values and avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Harmful societal norms and values perpetuated by ads include the idea that women should prioritize their physical appearance over other aspects of their lives (Nabi & Sullivan, 2001). This can lead to negative impacts on body image and self-esteem. Advertisers should strive to promote positive body image and gender equality through their messaging. These gender stereotypes perpetuated by advertising can have harmful effects on women's self-esteem and body image. Nabi and Sullivan (2001) found that ads promoting unrealistic beauty standards can lead to negative impacts on body image and self-esteem. Furthermore, Bessenoff (2006) found that social comparison can contribute to dissatisfaction with one's own body when exposed to ads portraying unrealistic beauty standards. Advertisers have a responsibility to promote positive societal norms and values and avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes. This includes promoting positive body image and gender equality through their messaging. By doing so, advertisers can contribute to a more equitable and just society.

Conclusion

Linguistic features play a significant role in ads targeting women, and exposure to unrealistic beauty standards and reinforcement of gender stereotypes can have negative impacts on women's self-esteem and body image. Advertisers have a responsibility to promote positive societal norms and values and avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Responsible advertising practices can promote positive body image and gender equality, contributing to a more equitable and just society.

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