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Date: March 15, 2016

Topic: Selling at the Expense of Women

General Purpose: To persuade

Specific Purpose: By the end of my speech the audience should have a different and critical view of the advertisements they encounter everyday that favors against the objectification of women.

Thesis: Not only do advertisements serve the capitalist function of consumerism, but also exploit the women of our society with these images.

Organizational Pattern: Refutation

I. Introduction

A. Attention Getter: "My eating disorder started my senior year of high school. I remember reading teen magazines as a young girl and wanting to look like those girls, but I had not a clue how to achieve that goal," said Mary Nightengale (as cited in Berberick, 2010, para. 28). She explains that what started out as a competition with her friend, ended up with bulimia and breast implants at 19 (Berberick, 2010). We would directly blame these magazines, but isn't it part of our responsibility as well? Every day, a new advertisement imposes a false reality on women that keeps them striving; in the end, helpless.

B. Reason to Listen: All of you, men and women, may look at advertisements jokingly or distantly, but this matter could touch any one of you: these women could be your mother, your sister, your daughter, your teacher. If you've ever wondered why females are always trapped in their insecurities, the media and our incompetence are reinforcing this behavior. Such issues cannot be resolved within one or two years, but it requires a constant effort of

reminding females, through generations, of the opposite of what they see.

C. Thesis Statement: Not only do advertisements serve the capitalist function of consumerism, but also exploit the women of our society with these images.

D. Credibility Statement:

1. I am enrolled in a class this semester that studies women in the media, which mainly shows how women are stereotypically represented. Personally, it's shocking results have opened my eyes to this gender issue that's been going on for years now.
2. Part of my research was already gained through the class, but for further data, I referred to several academic studies done on this subject.

E. Preview of Main Points:

1. First, I will discuss the arguments that defend this type of advertisements.
2. Second, I will refute these arguments and demonstrate why I am with banning any image that objectifies women.

II. Body

A. First of all, advertisers and people who lead big corporations favor this type of advertisements for personal and cultural reasons.

1. One may argue from a “media effects” perspective to protect the powerless role of the media.

a. In media effects theories, many would refute the absurd “hypodermic needle” model.

This model is defined by the rapid and direct effect on audiences after consuming or being exposed to media texts (Lacy, 2002, para. 3). However, advertisers join media researchers in their refutation: audiences are more complex than the model assumes. An individual's degree of responsiveness highly depends on her/his social and cultural circle;

hence, the media is the least effective force in this chain of behavior influences (Wright, 2008, para. 11).

- b. In a study done at Hanover College, 272 participants, who were mainly females (220) (George & Uhlenbrock, 2010, para. 11), were exposed to a number of magazine advertisements that portrayed women as mannequins, sex objects, athletes, and neutral (George & Uhlenbrock, 2010, para. 13). This study focused on whether these advertisements, after a short-term exposure, had a negative effect on the participants. Negative effects here are defined by having participants' perception of women in leadership roles affected; hence, degrade women of becoming powerful leaders in society (George & Uhlenbrock, 2010, para. 10). However, the results proved otherwise: the recorded effects were negligible (George & Uhlenbrock, 2010, para. 20).

2. An additional reason to why advertisers may continue to objectify women in advertisements is culture.

- a. The famous designer, Tom Ford, explains his use of sexualized images of women in his fashion advertisements by saying that he's an "equal opportunity objectifier" (as cited in Akbareian, 2015, para. 4). In other words, Ford objectifies both men and women yet he points out an important idea: our culture is more comfortable in exploiting and objectifying women than men (Akbareian, 2015, para. 4).
- b. "Christians will not be able to buy Kraft dressings or any of their products until they clean up their advertising," said the group One Million Moms after seeing the Zesty Italian ad (as cited in Gianatasio, 2013, para. 13). This response to Kraft's ad, that objectified a male, shows the rejection of the Christian society and the target audience, "mothers" to the objectification of male models (Gianatasio, 2013, para. 14).
- c. Since women constitute 85% of product consumers (Sheehan, 2013, p. 90), the advertisers' goal is to appeal to their male audience. From a capitalist perspective, in order to attract male consumers, they tend to use sexualized imagery. It's been proved that sexual imagery has a more powerful persuasive ability to lure men (Sheehan, 2013, p.104). Thus, advertisers innocently hide behind the sole purpose of objectifying women in capturing men's attention to products.

- Transition: After I have listed the different arguments that one might argue against banning such advertising, I will present a set of counterarguments that stand with the action of banning.

B. Despite the fact that sexualized imagery can elevate consumerism and show no short-term effect on society, other people would argue against it from a testimonial and feminist perspective.

1. To oppose the absurdity of the uniform and direct effect of media's images, different theories allow us to look at their effect on the long-term.
 - a. Opposing the "hypodermic needle" model of transmission, the media has other negative effects such as desensitization to violent/sexual media and the cultivation theory. Desensitization is characterized by having less emotional responsiveness after a recurrent exposure to violent/sexual media (Bryant & Miron, 2003, p. 445). On the other hand, the cultivation theory holds that the media shapes our knowledge of the real world by exposing us to certain information or type of communication (Bryant & Miron, 2003, p.450).
 - b. Following up on these two theories, we may now predict the possible damaging effects of having advertising that objectify women sexually and violently. First of all, we will become more "desensitized" to such images; thus, we will accept the exploitation of women passively without taking action against this crime. Also, it might dangerously create a new reality for both men and women: men will want women to be similar to those that they see in the media, all dolled up, and women will forever be insecure and seek to become the plastic and unreal image presented by the media.
 - c. Not to mention, the study I previously mentioned, done at Hanover College, only proved the media ineffective on the short-term. However, they had no proof of its effect on the long-term. As long as women are frequently buying magazines that are bombarded with manipulated images of models, these women might be influenced by these advertisements and images (George & Uhlenbrock, 2010, para. 23).

2. Real evidence of victims stating that the media affected them may seem absurd to media producers, but we cannot escape the large numbers that are being affected.
 - a. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, between years 2000 and 2009, there was a tremendous proliferation of plastic surgeries: breast enlargement (36% increase), tummy tuck (84% increase), lower body lifts (4,184% increase), arm lifts (4,191% increase), buttock lifts (132% increase), and breast lifts (65% increase) (Berberick, 2010, para. 14). How can we explain this increase other than that the media are promoting this behavior indirectly? Women in this case are seeking to become the object that is molded and manipulated constantly according to media standards.
 - b. Nevertheless, 10 million American women suffer from Anorexia or Bulimia Nervosa as reported by the National Eating Disorder Association (Berberick, 2010, para. 16). Unfortunately, if these disorders are left untreated, they will lead to the death of the affected person (Berberick, 2010, para. 16). One of the victims I have mentioned, Mary Nightengale, even after 15 years, constantly wishes and thinks of how she could become smaller (Berberick, 2010, para. 30). If merely reading about how a body should look like induces anxiety for women, then being exposed to images found in beauty magazines would reinforce it further (Berberick 2010, para. 32). Thus, this leads to what Nightengale suffered from, not only bulimia, but also self-objectification.
 - c. Studying the effect of looking at images of fashion models, Friedrich found that the 18 non-eating disordered women participants recorded a significantly high anxiety rating when viewing fashion models' pictures (Berberick, 2010, para. 24). This study concludes that media images are contributing to a lower happiness to anxiety ratio, affecting the well-being of women (Berberick, 2010, para. 24).
 - d. Not to mention, another dangerous societal effect caused by these images is how men and women perceive the dynamics of a sexual relationship. Anne, an interviewee on this matter, "admits to not finding sex pleasurable, but believes it was a behavior she has to model in order to fit into the guidelines of attractive or worthwhile, and she is not alone." (as cited in Berberick, 2010, para. 53). If all young women followed this way of living, it will only strengthen men's idea of the woman being merely a sex object made for man's pleasure (Berberick, 2010, para. 53).

3. This prevalent pattern in women's images, that is invisible to the consumers of media images, is contributing to a greater societal effect.
 - a. The more we are insensitive to women being objectified, the more women will become affected unconsciously by the dominant images surrounding them. Knowing that women make up 50% of the population, our society will be in trouble if a majority of this 50% is suffering and unable to be a normal human. Following up on this damage, it will be serving as a backlash towards the women's movement in advancing the equality between man and woman.

III. Conclusion

A. Review of Main Points:

1. I discussed why advertisers support producing images that objectify women.
2. I presented arguments that argue against these images due to their negative effects on women.

B. Restate Thesis: Not only do advertisements serve the capitalist function of consumerism, but also exploit the women of our society with these images.

C. Closure: "The need to be perceived as pretty and desirable became my main goal in life, not because I am vain, but because I learned how the world worked," said Nightengale (as cited in Berberick, 2010, para. 52). How does the world exactly work? Who makes it work? As long as we do not take action, we are only supporting the media to exploit women. If men and women react against this exploitation, they will become the only factors that will make the world work as they desire, and not as they are mythically forced. Let us burst this imaginary bubble of the beauty myth and refuse to be commodities in the hands of advertisers. We are women, not objects.

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