Chapter 24
Social Concerns in Advertising:
The Motives Behind the Indifference Towards Sexism Displayed in Advertising During the Purchase Decision

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ABSTRACT

Sexism is a complex construct since authors have different notions to present about the topic. Some of them state that sexism is the actions of prejudice based on gender. Therefore, to understand the evolution of sexism in advertising, we should focus on a niche that is provided by the emotional appeals: sexual appeal. The consequences of these stereotypes range from affecting female self-image to misogynistic teachings to which female, male, and child sex are exposed in the ads in question. In today's society, feminists, activists, consumers, and some media have been expressing concern about the sexist representation of women in advertising. In an exploratory and conceptual perspective, this chapter presents contributions for communication, marketing, and publicity around the phenomenon of sexism.

INTRODUCTION

The contribution that active sexism and daily sexist attitudes and behaviours provides to gender inequality happens in a large scale and seems to be a recurrent problem. The majority of authors' state that sexism can be divide in two categories: benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. One of the major problems is that the concept of sexism still faces, along with the concept of feminism, the society misunderstanding of the concept. There is not a fully notion of sexism understood by society and, sometimes, people do not take the matter seriously. The same happens with companies that do not see the subject as a relevant one. However, we are witnessing a paradigm shift and nowadays society is worrying about topics that were not as relevant in the past.

Advertising strategy is defined as an agglomeration of decisions, whose objective is the transformation into actions of the intentions specified by the publicist when placing an advertisement in the possession of the consumers. The study of female stereotypes in the advertising industry began in the 1960s. This was due to the birth of feminist movements. The feminist waves enabled women to search for the concept of equality, both in the world of work and within their homes. Female emancipation began to show strength in this decade. While some authors claim that advertising interferes with societies cultural and social beliefs, others indicate that advertising only reflects existing values. In view of the above, this chapter intends to present some contributions about the theme of sexism and advertising and its implications for marketing. In an exploratory and conceptual perspective, this manuscript presents contributions for communication, marketing and advertising around the phenomenon of sexism. Thus, it is intended to understand the phenomenon in a context of public and social marketing, having as reference the feelings that a brand has the ability to generate and that can be decisive to differentiate it from another competitor (Cardoso & Sousa, 2020). In a more practical contribution, the aim of the investigators is to create a list of reasons in order to explain that indifference towards a subject that strengths up gender inequality in our society.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter is to present a theoretical contribution about the phenomenon of sexism and an insight of why it is important.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing directs its focus to society. According to Kotler, it is defined as the design, implementation, and control of programs that aim to increase the acceptance of an idea and/or social project in a target group. As Cardoso and Sousa (2020) stated, it is also possible to define social marketing as a way of strategically managing support for social change in a cause of relevance for the public, seeking to realize the rights of citizens, from an ethical point of view.

However, Andreasen (1994) points out three problems with the definition presented above. In the first place, the author argues that choosing the term "social marketing" could lead people to confuse it with societal marketing. Societal marketing, as opposed to social marketing, seeks to protect individuals through market control, and does not deal with actions intending to behavioural changes, as in the case of social marketing. Then, as Andreasen (1994) points out, in second place, there was a discussion in order to make it clear if the practice of social marketing would be limited, or not, to the public sector and to non-profit organizations. The third problem was that the definition limited the purpose of social marketing solely to the acceptability of social ideas (Cardoso & Sousa, 2020).

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