Student Essay

Final English 097 Essay

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The Effects of Advertising

           Advertising comes in many different forms, from old fashion billboards to television commercials and email newsletters. There are advertisements everywhere and advertising has changed our values in an extremely negative way. According to most ads, luxury items such as expensive watches, clothing and cars are the idea for success. But that is not necessarily true. Success has a different meaning for everyone. But more and more people think success is having the latest and most expensive phones and gadgets. With new phones coming out every year, people will never be satisfied, and that is our problem as a society. In the article “Jesus is a Brand of Jeans” by Jean Kilbourne, the author writes about these negative effects that advertising has on us as a whole, and I couldn’t agree more.

            Kilbourne explains in her essay that advertisements provide false promises and do more harm than good. They might be “doing their job” as she says, but this job does not have any benefit to society or the world.  Its aim is to make people buy things, and it does this quiet well but with consequences.  As Kilbourne says it “creates a world view that is based on cynicism, dissatisfaction and craving.”

           Advertising is everywhere and it is very hard to avoid it. As Kilbourne writes, “To not be influenced by advertising would be to live outside of culture. No human being lives outside of culture.” I find this to be true. Anywhere you look there is an advertisement for something.  Look at the side bar when you are searching Google or the ads that pop up between smart phone games like Angry Birds.  Sporting events today are just as much about ads as they are about the sport.  The Super Bowl is a good example of this, where some people tune in just for the ads and where the media reports as much on who won or lost the game as on who had the best ad.  Today we are not even ad-free when walking in the park. Just last week, I was approached by someone handing out energy drinks dressed head to toe like the drink and driving a matching car. To say advertising is everywhere is not an exaggeration.

           In addition, advertisements objectify women and kill the self-esteem of young girls. Models are the new standard and if a woman doesn’t look a certain way, men don’t want them.  Kilbourne explains that “Self-image is deeply affected. The self-esteem of girls plummets as they reach adolescents partly because they cannot possibly escape the message that their bodies are objects, and imperfect objects at that. Boys learn that masculinity requires a kind of ruthlessness, even brutality.” Young girls try to live up to the today's “Standard of Beauty”, and sometimes they cannot compete. Girls that are fourteen years old can look eighteen with enough make up. The advertisers are at fault because there are not many ads about role models for young women, but more ads about make-up, clothing and models.

           Some ads also make people want things they didn’t even know they wanted themselves, injecting them with messages they don’t even know they are getting. In fact, as reported by a former editor-in-chief of the publication *Advertising Age*, “Only eight percent of an ad’s message is received by the conscious mind. The rest is worked and re-worked deep within, in the recesses of the brain” (qtd. in Kilbourne). Think about self-balancing boards. In 2015 self-balancing boards had become a big hit on the internet. The portable battery powered scooter can cost between $350 to $1000. They are being ridden everywhere from college campuses, malls and basically anywhere with a sidewalk. But self-balancing boards can be dangerous too. Hundreds of these scooters have been catching on fire around the U.S. So why are people buying them? It’s the power of advertising, which can be subtle, but still effective, and reach people who don’t even realize they are being reached.

For all the reasons stated above, like Jean Kilbourne, I believe advertisements are harmful. They objectify people and hurt the self-esteem of young women. They also make people buy unnecessary items through their subtle power. But advertisements aren’t going anywhere. They will keep going on forever. The only thing we can do to help in the future is to make better ads.

Works Cited

Kilbourne, Jean. “Jesus Is a Brand of Jeans.” *New Internationalist Magazine.* September 2006.

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