

Entrapping Through Empowering: An Analysis of New Capitalist Tendency of Manipulation of the “Other”

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Abstract: *The paper attempts to provide an analysis of 21st-century advertisements by opening the realms of capitalist motives. Advertisements are unofficial capitalist propaganda. This paper unmasks the hypocrisy of manipulating the consumer that is experienced as empowering by the consumer. Marketers take total control over and manipulation of consumer decision-making at precisely the moment we emotionally connect ideology in the advertisements.*

Key Words: *Capitalism, Consumer, Manipulation, Profiteering, Relevant Need, Emotional Manipulation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Consumer Capitalism is a theoretical economic and social-political condition in which the corporate entities manipulate the needs and demands of the consumer to purchase (and continue purchasing) material goods to the advantage of sellers and thus driving the capitalist economy. Edward Bernay's scheme of applying the principles of psychology, sociology and motivational research marked the revolutionary epoch in the history of consumer capitalism. The consumer-capitalist prime idea is that the value of a product is determined by the desire of the product than its actual need at the moment. They meet this end through various marketing techniques. Since the years unknown we have been caught in a consumer culture web. Our day-to-day experiences are bombarded with advertisements; newspaper, radio, TV, social media, public transports and even in public toilets. Some estimates state that an individual sees an average of 4000 to 10000 advertisements daily. Advertisements are unofficial capitalist propaganda. Even though capitalist entities claim that there involves no coercion of the individual, in the end, we have become exhibits of their exploitation.

2. TO HAVE AN AXE TO GRIND:

A significant evolution of advertisements has been taken place over these decades from newspapers to digital platforms. It has been adapting and changing to suit new mediums and audience constantly. One of the media that had a great impact on advertising is the internet. Only a decade ago, digital marketing was a toddler, but marketing has flourished so quickly that people receive personalized advertisements based on our demographics, psychographics, behaviour and more. However, it's only the medium that has been changed, not the tactics or the techniques. The simple formula of exhorting desires is being the bosom of advertisements even today.

According to John Zeally, strategic marketing is serving a consumer's "relevant need at the moment". This need can be created through Affective Conditioning. Affective Conditioning is finding a way to subconsciously associate the product with positive feelings. The association of a product with a positive feeling have a high impact on selling the product better. Therefore, its goal is to influence or nudge consumers' choice, either to steer them toward the option that the marketers believe is good for them or simply to stimulate purchase and increase sales.

Another intrinsic strategy is that of Commodity Fetishism. The Theory of Commodity Fetishism is discussed in the first chapter of Karl Marx's *Das Capital* (1867). Marx borrowed the concept of fetishism from *The Cult of Fetish Gods* (1760) by Charles de Brosses. The term fetish refers to the magical properties or godly powers inhere in inanimate things like totems. Commodity Fetishism refers to the magical properties a commodity possesses than its use value which make them more attractive. What the capitalist entities exploit is the "relevant need at the moment" of finding happiness and fulfilment. Fetishism of commodity can bring this happiness and feeling of fulfilment that the consumer is seeking.

There is always a special category of a consumer to whom the product wants to reach, serve and satisfy. If more people desire the product, the more will be the profit. Therefore, the tendency is to include more people in this intended category of consumer. And to meet this end, sometimes, the most acknowledged ideologies are subverted. This inclusion process, thus, results in the incorporation of the excluded "Other". This happens mainly in beauty products.

The concept "Other" was introduced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as a constituent part of self-consciousness. Edmund Husserl applied the concept of the Other as the basis for intersubjectivity, the psychological relations among people. The Other is dissimilar or opposite of the Self, of Us. Someone who is perceived by a group

as not belonging, as different in some fundamental way. Otherness takes many forms. The Other maybe someone of a different race (White vs. non-Whites), a different social class (aristocrat vs. serf), a different sexual orientation (heterosexual vs. homosexual), a different origin (native-born vs. immigrant), a different gender (male vs. female).

Self-consciousness about how identity is being perceived is bothersome to an extent. This can make a person less confident or insecure about himself. Discrimination of people based on skin colour is prevalent from earlier times. People with dark skin tone, thus, become conscious of their appearance. The biased mind-set of people seriously affects the mental equilibrium of such people with dark skin tone. A kind of unpleasant insecure feeling consumes their mind, making them neglected, avoided, and decentred to the outskirts of society. This results in the "Other" self in their self. The unequal treatment meted on them is unrighteousness and only the capitalist entities understood the need for recognition of the "Other" self. They embraced these disheartened people with their fair and lovely products which can lit up their hearts with lightening the skin tone. With the product in their hand, they are no longer the "Other" and their near good future is here within a couple of usage of this whitening product. The age-old strategy of Edward Bernay continued to make a profit by psychologically exhorting their desire for recognition and identification.

People down the ages are insecure about their skin tone and these insecurities secured the economic stability of capitalist entities. However the treatment of insecurities broadened with the ages and now it is not about melanin control, but promoting diversity. The advertisements of present times no longer feature the Tall White 36-24-36 figure, but women in all shapes and colours. The subversion of concept of an ideal woman absolutely has no intention of promoting diversity, but a very clever strategic plan of action. The inclusion of women of all age and colour is nothing, but profiteering through deceiving. The 21st century itself witnessed plenty of beauty campaigns affirming diversity and individuality. People with black skin or flawed skin, transgender, Muslims, differently abled persons have been treated as "Other" in all these years. But the advertisements of this generation foregrounded these figures to the mainstream arena assuring their identity and proclaimed there is no weak or flaw in being diverse.

For instance Mac campaign of foundation "All Ages, All Races, All Sexes" highlights both models and Mac employees inspiring many to be proud of their individuality. The Wet N' Wild "Breaking Beauty" campaign features an albinism model, a transgender DJ, a cancer survivor, and an amputee activist projecting the idea of embracing disabilities. Lancôme campaign of "My Shade My Power" showcase 40 different women from the United Kingdom. Glossier also came up with a monumental campaign featuring a pregnant Olympian and a plus-size model denoting their products no more care about shape and size. Orly also launched a halal-certified nail polish encouraging Muslim women to embrace their beauty while paying respects to their culture.

Advertisements are not art forms. It has neither an entertaining purpose nor a social message to convey, but certain goals to be achieved. They have at their hands a society to influence, a society to manipulate, and a society to make a profit by uplifting the marginalized, promoting diversity and providing entertainment. Therefore the inclusion of "Other" is just a part of a hidden agenda. Empowering themselves through empowering the "Other" or empowering themselves through entrapping the "Other".

The unconscious realm in every consumer camouflages some desires or fears. Dark skin tone, fatty body, flawed skin are considered un-ladylike, thus the social status would be at the bottom. They become too much conscious of their appearance and the stare of society creates a feeling of fear. The capitalist entities take advantage of this latent fear of "Others" of being unidentified. The "Others" exceedingly have the desire to be the Welcome Class, to have the feeling of fulfilment, to make someone like you for your individuality. The capitalists divert the libidinal energy toward the consumption of products. The lost 'Self' in the 'Others' identifies themselves with the models/images in the advertisement campaigns. The emotional identification with the images reassures the requisite of fair treatment and equal acceptance. There involuntarily flourish an emotional bonding with the brand that produces the particular product. Psychological anxiety is this answered and the capitalist quest is settled.

As Ardath Albee points out a consumer's need is the outcome of his/her interactions or experience at the moment. As far as the "Others" is concerned their "relevant need at the moment" is the acceptance of their individuality. The capitalist entities cease this precise moment of need or want. Sometimes the relevant need is constructed discursively through marketing strategies. Once the consumers are embedded with constructed need, the question is not about the next move, but of shaping the intentions of consumers in favour of the marketers. Consumer choices are, therefore no longer a self-determined, autonomous cognitive process, but a co-created outcome of a process by marketers. Through the application of principles of psychology, sociology, and motivational research the marketers exhilarate and manipulate the consumers' need. This is achieved through advertisements that manipulate the consumers' subjectivity at an ontological level. Advertisements should not attempt a rational or logical explanation of a product's usefulness; on the contrary, it deals entirely on the level of feelings and emotions. Here consumerism equates to personal happiness.

The most sensational scooty campaign of Hero Pleasure "Why should boys have all the fun?" was upheld the idea of women empowerment. Again the recent campaign of Dove "Courage is Beautiful" features healthcare workers

marked by the protective mask they have been wearing during the covid crisis. An attempt to foreground the hard work of these professionals is appreciable.

Have you ever thought about why these companies care so much about us? It is the profit they all care about while pretending we are our prime concern. They take up the Post-Truth psychology of people that circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

New Capitalist policy is profiteering through manipulation by promoting false empowerment of the insecure "Other". Through Affective Conditioning or connecting a positive feeling with the brand, they easily achieve this end.

3. CONCLUSION:

Anthropologist Mary Douglas and Economist Baron Isherwood stated that "goods are neutral, their uses are social" meaning that products can be used to make an individual statement about identity or individuality and thereby can also use to suggest that you are the same as everyone else for social recognition and acceptance. Capitalist entities reshape or restore the "Other" as a means of increasing consumption. All human interactions are seen as a form of market transaction.

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