

## **Advertising and Materialism**

### **Two Viewpoints on advertising and Promotion**

-Proponents (defendants of advertising) Argue That advertising and promotion:

- Provide info to us
- Encourage a higher standard of living (when we see ads we aspire to become like the people in the ads and that's a good thing, always striving for something better than what we currently have)
- Creates jobs and Helps new firms enter a market
- Overall promotes competition in the marketplace

(Kind of like market info model but w/ a different focus)

-Critics Argue that Advertising & Promotion:

- Creates needs and wants among consumer (ex: where as you didn't have a need for these sunglasses, you see the ad and suddenly that's what you want and feel like you *need* them)
- Advertising is more propoganda than info
- Overall promotes materialism, insecurity and greed in our society

### **Example of DeBeers and Diamonds**

-What does a diamond symbolize?

- Status symbol, wealth, luxury, marriage, "A diamond is forever"

-DeBeers & Diamonds

- Declining price of diamonds in 1938
- They hired a leading NY ad agency to make this product more appealing and more in demand once again
- Less desirable because they were cheaper and more people were buying them
- Old Image: sign of luxury and extreme wealth
- Created new image: symbol of everlasting love, diamonds = romance
- The strategy: product placement, celebrities at the time to wear diamonds, people who were idolized to wear them, stories and society photos, emphasis placed on size of the diamond, the bigger the diamond the more you're loved
- Ads placed in magazines w/ trend influence
- Extremely successful strategy

### **Definition of Materialism**

- Orientations emphasizing possessions and money for personal happiness
- Belief that well-being can be enhanced through one's relationship with objects
  - You will be better if you own certain objects b/c they're markers of high status and you're going to go places when you have the right clothes/bag

### **Social Values vs. Material Values**

- Social Values: Happy family, love, low stress, leisure time, good friends
- Material Values: Cars, money, items, expensive things, luxury

## **Materialism and happiness**

-People who strongly orient toward materialistic values (non-generosity, envy, possessiveness)

-Report less happiness and satisfaction w/ their lives

-Report lower relationship satisfaction

-Self and other-reports

-Is this a causal direction?

-Does being materialistic cause you to be less happy? Or other way around?

## **Causes of Materialism**

-Cultural values (certain cultures may value material possessions more than others)

-Family can be its own culture

-Compensation for worries/doubts about self worth

## **Social Comparison Theory (Upward/downward)**

-Tendency we have to make social comparisons

-Social comparison theory (When no clear standard to evaluate how we're doing, we're likely to compare ourselves to other people. This helps us evaluate how we're doing)

-Upward and downward comparison (We're doing better than person A, we're doing worse than person B)

-Advertising and upward social comparison

-Ads present us with a world that is similar to ours, but a better one

## **Advertising and Conditioning**

-Advertising messages are pervasive

-Repeated exposure to pairing of happiness with the purchase of goods

## **Longitudinal study of TV advertising Effects**

-Purpose

-Go beyond previous (correlational) studies

-Short and long term effects of advertising on materialism

-Examine interpersonal processes

-Sample

-600+ 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders

-Questionnaires

-Materialism

-Family Communication about consumption

-Results

-Exposure to TV advertising (time 1) positively correlated with materialism (Time 2)

-Moderated by parental discussion of consumption matters

-Strongest effects on materialism when related family communication is

low

-Conclusion: Advertising seems to contribute to materialism. But parents can neutralize these effects by discussing consumption

## **The role of parent-child communication about consumption**

- Moderated by parental discussion of consumption matters
- Strongest effects on materialism when related family communication is low
- But parents can neutralize these effects by discussing consumption-When it comes to young people, parental communication can reduce the effect of advertising on materialism

## **Advertising and Politics**

### **Political advertising and Eisenhower vs. Stevenson**

- 1952: Eisenhower vs. Stevenson Presidential election
  - Eisenhower ads were the first TV political ads
  - Important time when talking about political advertising
  - Stevenson didn't like the idea of political advertising and using TV to sell himself in a short commercial
  - Eisenhower embraced that strategy to promote himself and hired an ad agency to help put together these ads; person who created his ads and slogan was the person who created M & M'S ads: Rosser Reeves

### **Effects of advertising, including the unintended effects**

- Influence behaviors, voting and choices that we make
- Ads can effect attitudes, attack/negative ads, either work for the candidate and against the candidate if people are getting fed up, backlash
- Raise awareness; become aware who is running, what they look like, who they are
- Convey info: educational, informational, depends on the quality of the info in the ad
  - If you don't know much about issues, and then see political ad, you will experience a greater gain vs. someone who already knows all that info
- Salience of particular issues: more top of mind, shape issues we're making decisions about
- Candidate preference: hard for a political ad to completely change the mind of somebody, unlikely to switch if strongly geared towards one candidate, for people who are in the middle they are more easily swayed b/c not sure which way they're going to vote
- Unintended effects: people disgusted by whole process and lose interest and check out, a lot of bad info circulating and people make decision based of inaccurate info,

### **Types of political ads, including the research on attack ads**

- Early, Name ID (people can identify the candidate and recognize the name), function to establish identity of candidate
- Later, Argument ads (define what this candidate supports, what their positions are on specific issues), function is to communicate that candidate's ideology and what they stand for
- Later still, Attack ads (focus shifts away from candidate and to opponent, brings up issues that opponent wouldn't have brought up on their own and brings those to light), function is to insult the opponent