

(good) Images + (some) Psychology (items) = (good) Advertising?

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The paper I propose is based on images used in advertising and the way some of them influence people, in a psychological perspective, to buy the advertised product or service. Advertising uses four different basic principles known as AIDA: Attention (calls the attention to the product/service), Interest (it provokes and maintains the interest), Desire (awakens it), and Action (leads people to buy or use the product/service). These principles, plus mechanisms like dream, motivation, acceptance, empathy, seduction and other theories like the psychoanalytical, for example, will tell us why an image is more effective than another. I will bring examples of some printed advertisements to show my point of view.

I worked in a Communication Department in a private university in Portugal and one of my tasks was to analyze advertisements and plan the advertising campaign. Once, I was looking at some advertisements and the cleaning lady entered my office. I asked her opinion about those advertisements and she said that she liked some of them. I told her that some of the ads that she liked had works of Art. We are talking about a person that hardly knows how to read and does not go to museums. I explained to her that not all works of art are difficult to like or to interpret and ordinary people could enjoy some of them, as she did with the advertisements. After that time, we started to talk about Art and she began to think about going to a museum to see "what it is like". She went to a museum and, as happened with the ads, she liked some of the works. I think that Portuguese museums won another client.

I told you this story, because I am trying to show you how advertising can help to "educate" people and bring to them some "big C" culture, so they can have access to the formal and original one, and not stay attached to "little c" culture, that is the hearthstone one.

Before I get to what I intend to do, I need to give you some concepts and definitions. The first concept is "mass" (Moutinho): mass is an ensemble of people coming from heterogeneous ranks that, in spite of not knowing each other, are considered homogeneous while consumer of a product or service.

Kitsch

These are some things that I am going to focus when I talk about kitsch: historical approach, definition and my typology on the concepts that I did research. Matei Calinescu (234) argues that the term kitsch has several origins and definitions. It can derive from the English word "sketch" when, in the second half of the 19th century, the Anglo-Americans that wanted to buy a painting in Munich for a low price asked for a "sketch" and the German didn't quite understand what they wanted and called it "kitsch". For the same author (234), kitsch can also come from the German verb "kitschen", that means to collect rubbish from the street, or to forge old furniture into new one and the opposite; or it can come from "verkitschen", that means to make something cheap (Calinescu 234).

In spite of its several origins, kitsch has always a negative connotation imputed. In Europe, a kitsch object can be an Art substitute made for a lazy public that want to buy "Art", but doesn't want to understand its cultural values (Calinescu 227). In fact, Gillo Dorfles (140-141) says that kitsch is like a mass culture product. According to Umberto Eco (94),

kitsch can also be a work of Art reproduced technically (Eco 94) in posters, bookmarks, embossed works, or junk Art from "trashy" things to trinket, clothes, shoes, places, "souvenirs", or music (Baudrillard 110). Finally, Bruno Lussato and Gérald Messadié (115) write that kitsch can be the bad taste considered as a value.

After doing research about the various kinds of kitsch, I ended up with a typology that divides the concept in four aspects. The first one is tacky kitsch and is the most common concept that we have of it. We associate and identify kitsch easily this way, and everything that we find that has nothing to do with the "good taste" of a certain period of time, is considered kitsch. The second typology is objective kitsch, which does not need an interpretation. Tomas Kulka (31) says that kitsch should speak a common language that can be understood by everybody, because it cannot afford to be confusing. For the same author, the artist that chooses kitsch should be as much objective as possible, originate just one interpretation so there cannot be ambiguities or concealed meanings, because "(...) a kitsch picture of a nude refers to a nude." (110) The third typology is kitsch that sells, those things that are too popular and that sell very well. According to the previous item, kitsch is objective, easily identifiable and preferred by the consumer majority. We just need to observe what is for sale or is in our friends' house to be able to conclude that cheap imitations of the works of Art have several colors such as Rodin's *Thinker*, or *Venus of Milo* that sometimes can be found with both arms and hands, or even Da Vinci's *Last Supper* that can show up in some silver paintings relief, and so on. Kulka (82) asserts that the market for these aberrations or, in other words, for the "assault" to the original works of Art, was created, as I have already explained, by the tourists. They wanted to buy souvenirs, and ended up taking something completely different from the original that was going to lead them into a misconception aesthetic culture. Finally, the fourth typology is kitsch that "camouflages" Art objects like some advertisements that we are going to examine. This way, according to José Maranhão (87), kitsch stimulates the sentimental effects, but also tends to suggest the idea that the reader is improving a privileged aesthetic experience, because Hermann Broch (Moles 10) says that "[t]here is always a drop of Kitsch in every work of Art".

I believe that these four points are interconnected, because they have as main idea what is common to the majority of people: common taste, some lack of aesthetic sense that end up buying the same kind of things: the "tacky", the minor style, or, in just one word, the kitsch.

Advertising

Advertising is a creative form of emitting commercial information to attract possible buyers, using the available means and supports. Advertising has three ingredients that identify it and differentiates it from the other concepts: a) its informative capacity (it gives people information about certain products or services, its characteristics and the way you can buy them); b) its persuasive force (it is always trying to lead the target public to buy the publicized product); and c) its commercial character. The main objective of advertising is not to inform, but to make you dream, to give interest to products or brands (that usually they don't have) in order to make people buy them. Other advertising's goals are to let a product or service be known, its characteristics and ways of using it; to motivate the receptor and call his attention with arguments specially directed towards him; to emphasize the previous aspects in order to obtain a good impression on the advertised product or service.

AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) is the notion of the classical advertising principles that must be in every advertising campaign. According to it, advertising must call the attention to the product or service, promote its interest, make it known through the information provided provoking desire to lead the action to its acquisition. All this can be achieved by using the surprise effect that will catch the interest of the reader. In order to get this effect, we can use of the work of Art in one of three ways: an original (the complete work of Art or just part of it), a work of Art modified and adapted to what is being advertised, or a picture that remembers the original work of Art.

Psychology

So, everything I said until here must be related to some work mechanisms. These mechanisms may be the dream (the product or service must complete the consumers' dreams after buying it), the motivation (something in the picture motivates the consumer to buy what is being advertised), the acceptance (the advertisement as a whole must be organized in order to be accepted by the majority of the consumers), must be clear and easily understood. If we are talking about works of Art, we must be aware of its choice, because it must create empathy between the advertisement and the future buyer, must seduce him in order buy the product or service. All this can be achieved if the above mechanisms are all brought into concord. Other factors such as age, income, and demography can influence the reader's attention to the advertisement. Probably, if the reader is 35 years old and is a middle class worker from a big city, is more likely that he or she pays attention to an advertisement that uses a work of Art, than a 65-year-old person, retired from working all his/her life as a farm worker.

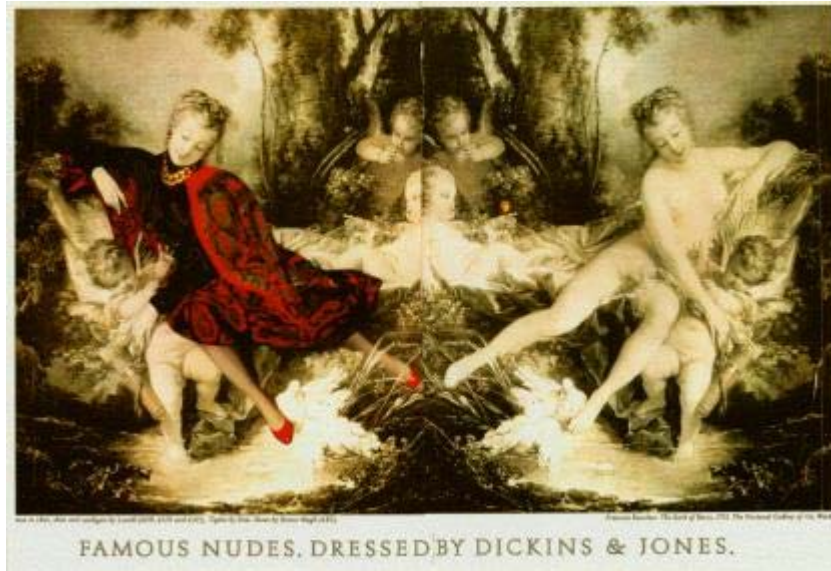
Maslow's Theory of Motivation tells us that each one of us must climb a hierarchy of needs in order to fulfill his or her self achievement. Maslow defines five needs: physiological needs are the first and the basic ones) such as hunger, thirst and sex; safety needs come in second place and are related to house, employment, religion, science, cars, and clothes; the social needs are in the third place in the pyramid and include the need for love, affection, and acceptance; in fourth place are the esteem needs that are divided into the recognition of our own personal capacities, and the recognition by the others of our functions and work; finally, the fifth are the self achievement needs in which the individual tries to be what he wants to be: "What humans can be, they must be: they must be true to their own nature!". After Maslow constructs his pyramid in the middle of the 20th century, society changed in many ways. Nowadays' needs have a different hierarchy, depending on the cultures, and advertisers must be aware of that.

Paul Messaris (229) writes about the use of Art in advertising as a sign of high status that can be related to the fourth level of Maslow's pyramid, when he talks about the personal recognition. According to this author, the association between Art and status leads to the dream of achieving a higher way of living just by buying the product. Walker (58) explains that advertisers use the works of Art "as tokens of high culture, superlative skill, and supreme value". The advertised products get these status of high culture just by having some "big C" elements.

Kitsch, Advertising and Psychology

Now I am going to show you some examples to illustrate what I have been saying and to relate these three areas: Kitsch, Advertising and Psychology.

First, we have *Famous nudes dressed by Dickins & Jones*.



This advertisement is inspired in François Boucher's *Bath of Venus* and we can consider it as a tacky kitsch example, because of the way it compares the original work (also modified by a yellow rose) with the one that advertises the clothes from Dickins & Jones. The same picture can also be used to show the way an advertisement can call the reader's interest by the way it was modified and adapted to the company's needs: to promote clothes from Dickins & Jones! Finally, as clothes are something that we need to protect ourselves from the exterior, they can illustrate the second degree of Maslow's pyramid of the human needs. The second picture is an advertisement of the Flor de Esgueva, a sheep's milk cheese.



This advertisement can describe the objective kitsch, because you have a table with some grapes and a plate with Flor de Esgueva's cheese peeping out of the painting. You can immediately see that it is publicizing the cheese. The same advertisement also describes one of the three ingredients of the advertising: the capacity to inform the future consumer; and also the first degree of Maslow's pyramid of the physiological needs: food. The third image advertises the auction of a painting--*La Feria*, from the Mexican painter Yolanda Garza--whose proceeding money will benefit the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.



As happened with the previous advertisement, this one can also describe the objective kitsch, because you can see some Mexican cultural aspects in the painting that are designated in the text. Regarding advertising, this image illustrates the way an original painting can interest its reader. If we are talking about psychology it can also illustrate the fourth degree in Maslow's pyramid - the esteem needs of being Mexican and of supporting the community. The fourth advertisement is from *Meio* (medium), a Brazilian newspaper that uses one of the most well-known paintings, a fresco in this case, from Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper*.



This image will shows us the kitsch that sells as well as the commercial character of the advertising, because the change in the painting was in order to show that the copies were very well distributed among some of the most prestigious people in the world! Last, but not the least, this advertisement also illustrates the esteem needs in Maslow's pyramid that is being well informed in order to keep the good work and develop good relationships. The fifth picture is from Van Cleef & Arpels, and is a "camouflaged" kitsch from Tamara de Lempicka's *Dormeuse*.



Because we can see the contrast between a black and white painting and a color picture of the advertised product, it calls our attention to the advertisement from the beginning. On the other way, the same image will illustrate the esteem of the third degree of Maslow's pyramid that are the social needs - by showing this piece of jewelry, you might be accepted by your peers or by the ones that belong to a higher class standard (where you wish to belong to). The sixth advertisement remembers a colorful Andy Warhol's serigraphy, so it will catch our interest to look at it; and also because it is so well-known we can consider it as a kitsch advertisement that sells.



We need to communicate with each other, and the Telefonos Publicos ETB will allow that in the first degree in Maslow's pyramid--to communicate is like a basic need nowadays. The seventh advertisement is from the Vagary watches and uses Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*.



Once more, it is a kitsch that "camouflages" Art. Regarding AIDA's interest characteristic, this picture was modified and adapted to the advertiser's needs to sell the watches, although at first sight you might think that they are advertising lingerie. Talking about needs, it also describes the social needs of Maslow's pyramid, as well as the self achievement. This means that if you buy one of Vagary's watches, you will be accepted by those who have a high standard of living. The eighth advertisement, and the last one, is from Ford and has the previous original painting, Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, and is also a kitsch that "camouflages" Art, but it is more persuasive in the advertising "ingredients". Finally, this advertisement shows the need of safety in Maslow's pyramid.



Conclusion

We know that advertising has been getting a bigger importance throughout the years, embracing a universe of readers from various ages, sexes, beliefs, and social classes. Because of that, advertising has responsibilities, because it communicates, and one of them can be the education of the alleged "common man", as we have been seeing until now.

Some authors say that one of the functions of Art is to create new attitudes, habits or beliefs in the mass society, and advertising could be the way of getting that. Advertising works with the aesthetic side, or has to do with visual delight through an advertising aesthetic that values the product using photographs with dream sceneries, with people embellishing the

picture, plus the graphic design, etc. Everything is put together, in order to seduce and to lead the consumer to buy the product or service advertised and this can also be an educational way to "teach" and to spread some "big C" culture. So, the more objective and obvious the example or the image is, as sometimes happens with the kitsch, the more interest it arouses and, consequently, more readers it gets. And... why not play with some psychology items to help on that?

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