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The representation of gender power can be found in all areas of marketing communication but few are more prominent than the representation within luxury goods advertising. Pollay (2000) demonstrates the powerful mirroring effect (and indeed affect) of advertising in society; therefore I will be exploring the influence that advertising has on the marginalisation of women. This paper identifies how negative and stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising influences the marginalisation of women. As a result of the analysis of three prominent advertisements I develop The Chain of Voicelessness identifying how the underlying message of all three examples generate unintended consequences and thus implications related to power relations for women as a group. It is clear that such a chain of events is still present and that advertising messages play a clear role in the early stages

Key words: Luxury goods, advertising, marginalisation, representations of gender

INTRODUCTION

The representation of gender power can be found in all areas of marketing communication but few are more prominent than the representation within luxury goods advertising. In order to accurately explore this statement I will be examining the representation of women in, what can be considered as, gender neutral products. The following examples are considered as gender neutral as they are all products which are used by both males and females. The three key examples, described in detail later, are derive from the automotive, technology and alcohol industries highlighting brands considered as luxury/high quality. Pollay (2000) demonstrates the powerful mirroring effect (and indeed affect) of advertising in society, therefore I will be exploring the influence that advertising has on the marginalisation of women. This paper identifies how negative and stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising influences the

marginalisation of women. The last few years has seen the feminist movement within the UK aiming to overtly tackle the marginalisation of women in advertisements through the newly established concept of Femvertising (Davidson 2015). Femvertising is the empowerment of women within advertising and has been proven to have positive influences on sales (AdWeek 2014). However the following contemporary examples from BMW, Microsoft and SKYY Vodka show that there is still a prominent presence of female representation within the advertising industry that draw upon sexual stereotypes and so generate negativity in terms of portrayal. In order to determine the extent to which these adverts answers the papers title I will analyse a chain of events that result in women having little or no voice; the underlying message (how the ads contribute to the marginalisation of women), the implications of this message (how it is decoded by women) and the results of why it contributes to women having little or no voice.

In order to accurately address the paper's title there must be an exploration into the concept of power. Power can be described as a divisible entity that is possessed by one to the detriment of another (Hindess 1996, cited Denegri-Knott et al 2006). According to Weber (1968, cited Johnston and Klandermans 1995) the concept of power and power gaining has a recognisable effect on culture, and the interests of powerful groups had a lasting influence on culture and society. Taking this into consideration, the dominant and powerful voices advertisers possess has the ability to affect cultural perceptions both negatively and positively for any commodity or representation of human categories featured during the advertisements. In theory the way in which representation of women are featured will influence the perceived cultural and societal standing for this group, therefore the following paper will explore the chain of events that derive as a result of advertisers power within society. Additionally power will also be explored in context to the actual depictions of women in the ads. The word 'Gender' is a socially constructed word that refers social or cultural distinctions between men and women rather than the physiological differences (APA 2011). Traditional gender roles highlighted men having more power, in some areas such as job opportunities, education and rights (Hughes 2015), but as the prevalence of equality and promotion of female power arises these gender roles are being challenged. The following paper will also explore power through representation of the gender roles of women in the SKYY, BMW and Microsoft examples.

A prominent concept in how these luxury goods examples contribute to the marginalisation of women within advertising is symbolic annihilation. Gerbner (1972) coined the term through underrepresentation of women in the media however it was later that Tuchman (1979) highlighted that female symbolic annihilation also occurs through the demeaning and trivializing of women in the public sphere. It is important to note that a source of symbolic annihilation is gender stereotyping which, as defined by Tuchman (1979) below, incorporates the idea of the objectification of women. A combination of all these aspects leads to female symbolic annihilation within the chosen luxury goods examples.

> 'The media's deleterious role models [...] encourage both men and women to define women in terms of men (as sex objects) or in the context of family (as wives or mothers).'(Tuchman 1979, p. 531).

The demeaning of women highlighted by symbolic annihilation is present in the objectification of women seen within the BMW (Figure 1) and SKYY (Figure 2) print ads. SKYY was chosen as an example as it is a typical advertisement released by the brand; being one of many ads that grabs consumer attention in part through their demeaning of women. On the other hand, the BMW example was one half of an advertising

campaign released by the company aiming to appeal to each gender at the detriment of the opposite sex. Although the campaign as a whole might be considered equally insulting to both genders, due to the context of traditional gender roles being challenged, it is important to consider the implications that the image in Figure 1 specifically had on a contemporary audience vis a vi what 'female' signifies.

Figure 1: BMW Print Ad

Cortese (1999, p.g 13) states that 'gender representations in advertising are intricately linked to social arrangements and power structure'. The sense of power and gender roles are extremely prominent in the imagery of both these ads, for example through the positioning of male and female characters. Both BMW and SKYY display 'Function Ranking' within the imagery of their ads, for example the woman is positioned physically lower than the male counterpart within the social situation represented. Through the concept of relative size the men are perceived as more dominant and more powerful whereas the woman is submissive due to the photographic positioning within the images (Goffman 1976 cited Smith 1996). The female representation ritualises

subordination (Rodriguez 2009) as their body language is decoded by the audience as submissive and contrasts the male stance as they are positioned closer to the ground. This portrays that the woman has relatively little control over her life and is in submissive appeasement to the male.

Figure 2: SKYY Vodka Print Ad

SKYY's representation of male and females also further reinforces power through the choice of clothing for the characters. The man is wearing a suite that is a symbol of success within the corporate world (Gwynne and Muller 2013) whereas the woman is wearing very little and the angle is emphasising her chest. By exposing her body SKYY was promoting subconscious seduction in the hope that by stimulating desire it will prompt the audience to register the ad on their subconscious (Cortese 1999, Chacko 2014).   Each aesthetical decision, from the choice of female 'skin tone' to the 'exaggerated length' of the man's legs adds sexual connotation (Cortese 1999, p.g 21). Although by implying a sexual context within the social encounter does not necessarily demean women, when coupled with the Function Ranking and Relative Size power portrayals, this ad starts to encourage negative peripheral perceptions of women.

It is also prominent that the objectification of women appears in the BMW ad through the dehumanisation of the female character. By covering her face with the magazine it is separating her body into two parts and by doing so Cortese (1999, p.g 21) suggests that this 'perpetuates the notion that a woman's body is not linked to her mind, soul and emotions. [...] The implication is that women are objects and therefore less human'. Covering the head and face is particularly strong as it symbolizes women have no brain and no identity, by creating no identity it could be seen as addressing and belittling women as a collective rather than just the woman pictured. This is also seen on a less influential scale within the SKYY advert; the audience can see her features but she is unidentifiable. With consideration to the aforementioned dehumanisation and objectification of women within the examples, accompanied with the materialistic culture of the UK (Ramesh 2011) and implied intimacy of the social encounter, the negative representation of women in this advertisement becomes even more powerful for passive audience viewers. Intimacy is implied through the setting of a bedroom, more specifically lying on the bed, and the body language of the man looking intently at what would be the woman's eyes if the magazine was not there. The car is deemed more appealing than the identity and look of the woman's face, therefore appealing to the male target audience by implying that BMW's car is more important than women. This suggests the importance of the brand but to the detriment of women.

The Microsoft ad (Oh 2014) differs significantly from SKYY and BMW as it does not demean women through objectification but it does however contribute to symbolic annihilation through the trivialisation of women. Microsoft released a series of female specific marketing including a TV ad for their new touch screen laptops, however it is seen in this paper as an example due to its blinkered and narrow depiction of appealing to all women as 'the wife'. In order to make it apparently gender appropriate Microsoft tried to make their advertising narrative appropriate for women and in doing so they ended up being potentially insulting to much of their target market (Oh 2014). By creating the narrative about a woman and her friends 'planning her wedding', Microsoft fell into the gender stereotype of women in the context of family and defining them as 'the wife'. This subject choice along with their choice of language patronised women by giving the one track personality of being the wife and implying their day to day digital activities were social rather than for example academic. The video was criticised (Oh 2014) as its main selling points to women was that 'it looks great' and it is 'easier to check Pinterest and plan my wedding'. By using language that focuses on how the product looks it connotes that women are materialistic and image conscious. In an attempt to appeal to the target market the video also mentioned a popular social media site for women although, given as it's not likely you want to insult your target audience, it can be assumed that this was not decoded with the desired effect as it insinuated that all women need a computer for is: social media and gaining approval from others.

Overall it is clear that aspects of the luxury goods advertisements sector do contribute to the marginalisation of women using symbolic annihilation through objectifying and stereotyping. It is worth observing that the Microsoft examples of discrimination towards women were more subtle. It can be argued that this may be due to the lack of a male counterpart within the ad which would allow comparison of the male/female social queues and observations of stereotypical social dynamic. It is important to consider the argument that, as well as the SKYY and BMW examples stereotyping women, they also promote male stereotypes. Although this puts social pressures on men as well as women, the male role of being powerful is encouraging and

almost aspirational whereas the female role of being submissive is demeaning and limiting.

In order to explore why the advertisements featured contribute to women having little or no voice we will analyse the implications of the messages to broader society. Othering, hyper ritualization and altercasting are a result of the symbolic annihilation of women within these adverts and will be the main focus on how the message is decoded and how it affects societal norms.

Through all of the examples featured we can see that these advertisements as a whole are 'othering' women through their representations. Rosenthal and Crisp (2006 cited Canales 2000) recognised that the focus on differences or similarities within group representation have the ability to negatively or positively influence the use of gender stereotypes. This theory is most prominent illustrated within the SKYY and BMW examples through the focus on gender differences. Through utilizing the power within relationships for domination or subordination this results in the promotion of exclusionary othering (Canales 2000). Exclusionary othering creates the sense of ingroups and outgroups which can be detrimental in a social setting. Within these advertisements males are represented as dominant and therefore 'in group' and women the 'out group'. Sheriff and Sheriff (1969 cited Canales 2000) highlight that there is often hostility towards the outgroup, which highlights that these representation are encouraging societal hostility towards women. This sense of societal hostility may not necessarily be as overt as physical hostility actions but may be as subtle as the message implications themselves.

Similarly, the Microsoft example creates ingroups and outgroups however it differs from SKYY and BMW as instead of creating these groups within society as a whole it does so amongst just groups of women. The representation of 'the wife' present within the advert creates a series of social norms which are expected of women which is explored further later using the concept of altercasting. The ingroup is the woman and her friends planning her wedding therefore highlighting that a woman whose priority wasn't planning her wedding and being 'the wife' is part of the out group. Within the UK society this could influence women by limiting their choice of lifestyle as they are reluctant to be in the outgroup and do not want the hostility that this might generate from others. By subtly altering behaviour through making people reluctant to enter the outgroup, Microsoft's advertising is trying to use compliance gaining (Snider 2010) in order to persuade women to buy their product. Compliance gaining can be more effective in this case as altercasting compliments the process. Through the altercasting of women telling them how they are suppose be, those who accept this message will be more inclined to comply to the parameters outlined by the dominant voice (in this case the advertisement). By utilising the theory of compliance gaining in order to be persuasive, Microsoft starts to skim the border of advertising and ethics which is ultimately why it was criticised as a communications piece.

BMW and SKYY also raise questions of the ethics of their advertising, however this time it is seen via the encouragement of altercasting (Pratkanis 2000) through hyper ritualising (Jhally 2009) gender stereotypes. Goffman (cited Cortese 1999) says 'advertisers conventionalize our conventions, stylize what is already a stylization, make frivolous use of what is already something considerably cut off from contextual controls. Their hype is hyperritualization'. Through prioritising one aspect of culture (in this example the potential power of men) whilst ignoring another (in this example the power of women) it creates new meanings and reinforces existing meanings about gender. For example as SKYY and BMW have representations of both men and women they have the

opportunity to hyper ritualise both gender stereotypes. This can be seen through the over emphasis on male power in the ads (whilst ignoring women's power) and portrayal of women as 'sex objects' (effectively ignoring the negative stereotypes of men). By over emphasising women as sex objects it promotes and outlines societal 'ideals' about how women should look, act and behave, influencing them into a social role of the sex object; also referred to as manded altercasting. Inadvertently, whilst using manded altercasting (Pratkanis 2000) to persuade their male target audience to buy their product in order to fulfil their proposed role, they are inflicting a negative social role on women and enforcing manded altercasting on their societal role also.
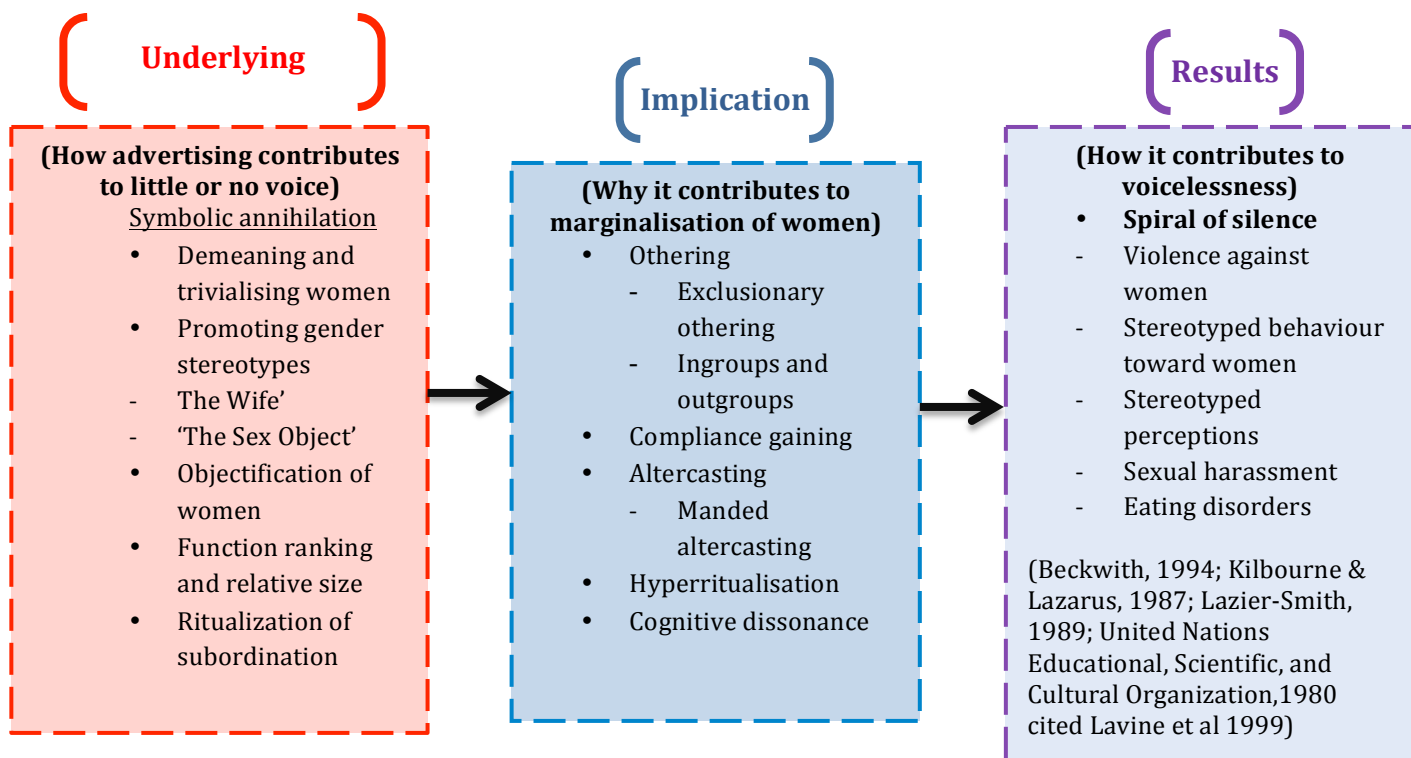
Similarly to Gerbner's (1976) finding within the cultivation theory in regards to television, due to the nature of advertising and the levels of exposure to the masses it has the ability to shape social meaning, Jhally (2009) also contributes that advertising is meant to represent what is real in the world. Although the prominence of feminist voices in the media play a part in popular opinion rejecting these depictions, the ubiquitous nature of advertising still overpowers this noise barrier (Shannon and Weaver 1949)

Moving on, the theme of limitation is dominant when interpreting how symbolic annihilation affects women in society. Although this can result in a number of factors that would create voicelessness, I believe one of the main reasons is due to the concept of the Spiral of Silence (Neumann 1984). Through the presence of othering, altercasting and as the media with the most dominant voice, women are less likely to voice their opinion. Othering promotes the spiral of silence with the fear of entering the outgroup and receiving hostility as a result. Altercasting also promotes the spiral of silence from the enforcement of societal gender roles and the fear of dissonance if one was to step out of those roles. As relatively straightforward as it seems for these advertisements to generate a spiral of silence in some of its audience, the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957 cited McLeod 2008) suggests that it would be hard to then eradicate this outcome it. It is ultimately easier for one to accept our cultural or gender role as to not cause dissonance and therefore it would take a lot of persuasion for one to change their attitude and reject the stereotypes and roles inflicted on women by, amongst other things, advertising.

Overall, whilst these advertisements may be just an image or a short video, they play a significant role in society and cultural views. It can be observed that their outdated representation of gender, power and gender roles has the ability to marginalise and remove the voice of women. Figure 1 shows how SKYY, BMW and Microsoft's approach can trigger a chain of events which ultimately results in women in the UK having little or no voice, and thus limiting the legitimate voice they can possess. Although I only discussed the Spiral of Silence, Lavine et al (1999) cited more specific ways of how these examples contribute to voicelessness.

Figure 3: The Chain of Voicelessness

Underlying

(How advertising contributes to little or no voice)
Symbolic annihilation
- Demeaning and trivialising women
- Promoting gender stereotypes
- The Wife'
- 'The Sex Object'
- Objectification of women
- Function ranking and relative size
- Ritualization of subordination

Implication

(Why it contributes to marginalisation of women)
- Othering
  - Exclusionary othering
  - Ingroups and outgroups
- Compliance gaining
- Altercasting
  - Manded altercasting
- Hyperritualisation
- Cognitive dissonance

Results

(How it contributes to voicelessness)
- **Spiral of silence**
- Violence against women
- Stereotyped behaviour toward women
- Stereotyped perceptions
- Sexual harassment
- Eating disorders

(Beckwith, 1994; Kilbourne & Lazarus, 1987; Lazier-Smith, 1989; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization,1980 cited Lavine et al 1999)

Source: Author

The concept of power and gender roles/expectations are present within each step of the model. The Chain of Voicelessness is the development of the findings within this paper identifying how the underlying message of all three examples caused implications for women as a group and resulted in the Spiral of Silence. The model also considers additional results, cited by Lavine et al (1999), which can occur and may fuel the spiral of silence that may already exist for some women.

It is clear that such a chain of events is still present and that advertising messages play a clear role in the early stages. However, it is important to note that although the above examples promote voicelessness, not all advertising does so. Whilst the essential argument is about representation of voice and power of women, in researching this paper there is an argument that this also can apply to men and is an area for future exploration. It is also important to recognise it is possible to advertise without demeaning or trivialising women and most importantly it is possible to generate gender specific ads that do not marginalise a group. Although, as the Microsoft example shows, there is a very thin line between appealing to a gender target audience using informed preferences and contributing to the Chain of Voicelessness through negatively stereotyping.

In summation, and in tune with critical race theory (UCLA 2009), sexism and gender inequality are embedded into UK society and that many years of exposure to ads that reinforce this position means it is fair to afford it considerable responsibility in marginalising women. In order to promote gender equality within advertising an application of feminist views on the factors within the chain of voicelessness outlined

earlier in this paper is required. This is the logical starting point for facilitating a positive portrayal rather than the negative examples featured within this paper.

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