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Introduction

This research paper will be focusing on three keywords. They are, psychology, capitalism and Metaverse in relation to the context of advertising and marketing. I will investigate these three aspects and discuss the advertising industry in the twenty-first century in depth. Simultaneously, people such as sociologist (Vance Packard), art critic (Boris Groys), cultural theorist (Raymond Williams), and others who correspond to the key themes that will be discussed further in the following passage.

Psychology

The public assumptions about advertising happened to play on the idea of spinning the truth of a product or service. Vance Packard, a sociologist argued that “*advertising is dangerous because it uses psychology to create emotionally loaded hidden messages*”. Cubic Muse (2012) made known to us that because the message is hidden, the viewer’s critical resistance is evaded and minimized. Therefore, this gave us an idea that the advertisement can sometimes be misleading and manipulative for the audiences’ perspectives.

In the same way, as media have been studied by psychologists largely as platform for delivering content (violence, sex, prosocial behaviour), advertising has been studied as vehicles for delivering messages. Giles (2010, p.34) stated that, “*advertising also*

has been known as a persuasion tool that may lead the audience to act in a certain way". According to Shannon and Weaver's Model of Communication's statement, we know how to develop effective communication between sender and receiver from therein which carries similar function to the basic model of advertising - prescribing from the sender, medium, message to receiver. Consumers' behavioural changes will be noticeable after this process. There is ample support for the claim by Kitchen (1994) that, *"advertising is aiming to progress customers through the cognitive, affective, and behavioural stages before they buy the products"*.

Basically, the audiences could be categorised into two parts. One could be understood as the cognitive side who is *compos mentis* and being comprehensible to take action upon the power of commercial persuasion while the other could be known as the subliminal side who did not really focus on the relative message yet is totally unconscious about the advertising's effect at the same time. Nevertheless, both sides will be influenced when doing decision-making. The discovery that people are more likely to take an action based on their intentions also has implications for advertising. If marketers would succeed not only in persuading potential buyers to buy their products but also to form an implementation intention, when and where to buy it. (Fennis and Stroebe, 2010, p.206)

In addition, Pant (2007, p.109) mentioned that, *"it is generally very difficult to attempt to change people's beliefs, particularly strongly held beliefs, even if they are incorrect, because people like to believe that their behaviour is rational"*. Hence, the possibility of them switching brands' loyalties is considered low unless someone they trust gets

them to change. Many of the central research questions in word-of-mouth ('WOM') apply to social influence. Research on social advertising can contribute to the broader understanding of social influence in the behavioural and economic sciences. (Bakshy et al., 2012)

For instance, the advertisement often shows models with good body shapes, portraying the message of skinny or muscularity as the definition of beauty which affects the audiences' perspective and losing oneself in unhealthy behaviours. Respectively, the audiences started to develop body dissatisfaction, captivated by deleterious diet to achieve the so-called 'body goals' and tend to be glamorising anorexia. It causes disparities between the actual self and the ideal self, where people see themselves as so far from having the 'perfect figure' that they either resort to unhealthy methods to achieve it, or simply sink into low self-esteem and despondency. (Cafri et al., 2005, p.44).



Figure 1. Fashion brand, Abercrombie and Fitch received backlash from the society as it did not offer clothes in larger sizes. Mike Jeffries, CEO of the brand once mentioned that he doesn't want larger people shopping in his store, he wants thin and beautiful people. (Lutz, 2013)

In this new era, everyone can be famous with just one click away. Building a reputation is no longer a difficult task that necessitates years of dedication and brilliance. Fame is the social process by which people become famous, regardless of what they have done. (Giles, 2000). Influencers manage to be vast around the globe and some identify themselves as a content creator. Eventually, they will receive items from the clients and describe how great the product or service works on them so it will attract their followers/ potential buyers. In addition, some of these influencers were lacking work ethics and just promote it for the money without trying the actual product.

This leads us to ask the question of whether these shifting cultural ideals the direct result of media, or do media and body dissatisfaction simply reflect other changes that have occurred in Western society in recent years? Could the consumers stay conscious and rational before the capitalisation from the advertisers in the market?

Capitalism

Advertising's role as a cultural form should not be overlooked. Advertising is typically portrayed in academic discourse as a tool used by the capitalist regime to legitimise and reinforce its socio-political arrangements. Advertising accomplishes this by portraying consumption as a solution to all material and social needs. Zaykova (2015) opined that advertising did not just promote a product or service, yet it provided an area for culture and political boundaries as well. Capitalism refers to the ownership of capital (mainly in private sectors) by distributing goods and services, setting market prices, and operating for profits in an economic and political system. It tends to form a social hierarchy in which the silk-stocking people become the top of the pyramid, dominating the lower classes to work and acquire their products, ruling the society.

William Bernbach, one of the giants of American advertising in the 1960s and 1970s (the period-piece TV show *Mad Men* often refers to him), famously said of his profession, *"Advertising is fundamentally persuasion and persuasion happens to be not a science, but an art"* (Ignatius, 2013). Meanwhile, Groys (2009) believes that, *"art can simultaneously affirm and critique an ideological system by turning its ideals into something tangible. His argument focuses on Socialist Realism but can also be applied to the Capitalist Realism of advertising"*. Capitalism could be found in most media forms such as music, films and even video games which indirectly engage with advertising. That is how the capitalists maximise their profit by convincing their customers to purchase the goods.

For instance, promoting a brand on YouTube could be challenging but there are always other options to boost a brand. Advertisers can create YouTube subscribers for you at this website namely, <https://getfans.io/buy-youtube-subscribers>, by assembling art that is unique to your brand and conveying a message about why the consumers need your brand. Teresa (2019) suggested that agencies could use rigorous planning, comprehend their consumers, and tackle their consumption behaviour to generate more sales which could lift marketing performance.

Holm (2017), conveys that, *“we can consider advertising part of the superstructure of society: advertising is one of the most immediately direct cultural symptoms of the underlying economic logic of capitalism”*. In simple terms, it means the rituals, ideas and forms of advertising wouldn't exist. if our economy wasn't organised according to capitalist systems.

Although we have our own thinking in the act of consumption, it is undeniable that sometimes advertisements were delivered in a captivating way to the world which people could bear to be in debt, getting loans or instalments just to purchase property, cars, any high-end products, or items that desired. The loop keeps ongoing as we need to work and earn a living, consume, and pay bills while the capitalists continue to produce what the markets need. Kotler (2016), *“I am personally not happy that marketing's role is to tempt people to buy products that they might not be able to afford.”* He defined that companies should be more ethical by pricing it right, setting a margin for people who can afford it.



Figure 2. These adverts sell the 'necessity' of credit cards to create the most meaningful moments in time, thereby marketing the world as one of total consumerism. (Askew, 2018)

In contrast, Raymond Williams, one of the earliest critical commentators on advertising as a cultural form, argues that *"one of the consumer society's main problems is that we are not materialist enough"*. He once mentioned, *advertising "has passed the frontier of the selling of goods and services and has become involved with the teaching of social and personal values"* (2005, p. 207).

The precept was that if we are only focusing on the products or services quality, we would not be distracted by the ads easily. For example, a ring can just be a normal accessory without it being portrayed as an infinity love if one was given by your partner, a robot vacuum cleaner that removes dirt rather than giving a meaning as equipment which prevent family arguments for house chores. Likewise, we ought to pay more attention to the product quality itself instead of the perception that has attached to the objects.

Nevertheless, capitalists could drive the markets' price, yet consumers could also enjoy a lower price with the help of forces of demand and supply as it breeds competition among the others. Consumers also need to hold firm in their own perspective, being rational while making the purchase to prevent any financial issues.

Metaverse

The term metaverse was defined by the society as, *“a variety of shared spaces and assets that people can access via the internet, sometimes using virtual reality and augmented reality devices, and interact with each other and buy virtual goods”* (Business Insider, 2022). Likewise, it seems like a parallel dimension where you could be anywhere that you wish to without actually being at the physical sites. We could deftly predict the full version of Metaverse based on Web 3.0 which represent the decentralised protocols.

Ever since the pandemic happened in 2019, the daily activities of the people were disrupted due to lockdown. This made online purchases soared as people can easily access online shopping anywhere and anytime. Hence, the consumption of video games skyrocketed too, and this is the time when brands started to focus on this fast-growing virtual world. Leo Burnett, the founder of an American advertising company once said, *“Don't tell me how good you make it; tell me how good it makes me when I use it.”* Unlike the traditional advertising where a model is the centre of the narrative (Song et al., 2021), Metaverse could be seen as a new platform for the advertisers as

it interchanges the boring two-dimensional world into a sensual experience for the consumers, making them as the star of the show by featuring them in the brand experience itself.

After Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook announced the Metaverse movement, Nike act swiftly to become the first major brand that participated in this trend. Moore (2021) told us that, *“Nike filed seven trademark applications with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as a step into the metaverse space – including applications for “Nike,” the slogan “Just Do It,” the swoosh logo, as well as “Air Jordan” and “Jumpman” logos”*. It also has launched its virtual world called Nikeland and distributed virtual apparel for the users to dress up their avatars. Nike Digital continues to be the fastest-growing component of its marketplace, now representing 26% of our total Nike Brand revenue. Jack Donahoe, Nike’s chief executive and president said *“We’re pleased by the positive momentum and energy we’re already seeing in the space and we’re excited by the future as we continue to extend our digital leadership in the industry.”* (Sutcliffe, 2022)

Besides that, property assets could be marketed virtually as well. For example, Inspace Stack creates virtual tours of existing spaces and even unbuilt layouts to bring sellers’ vision to life, helping the clients to lease or sell faster. This provides immersive property visualisation experiences either for the landlords or agents in the commercial which attracts consumers’ attention assuredly.

Today, the closest we have to the Metaverse are games like Fortnite and Roblox. They could be known as the “proto-Metaverses”. According to Titone (2021), he is of the view that, *“each of these platforms offers a shared virtual and three-dimensional space that facilitates experiences beyond gaming”*. For instance, Marshmello and Travis Scott, these American music producers have held their virtual concerts on both Fortnite and Roblox. People must be in doubt about the quality of multi-sensory experience compared to attend their concert in real life. However, the results were way more impressive as it could reach out to millions of players around the world, raising its brand identity at the same time which has surpassed the data by holding an actual concert that might only fit thirty thousand audiences in a venue.

Additionally, luxury fashion brand, Gucci also launch its Gucci-themed world by partnering with Roblox. The players could purchase virtual items (in-game content) by using real money in the world. In fact, one player has spent \$4,115 on a virtual Gucci handbag. (Glaveski, 2021) Of course, every piece of the product was limited. The moment when the consumers heard about the term, “limited”, they will eventually become so obsessed and could not wait to own the item and stand out among the others.

Moreover, Hasbro, an American toy company has collaborated with Roblox to develop real-world physical Roblox-inspired Nerf guns. Once you have purchased the product, you could even redeem a virtual equivalent item in the game with the code given. This collaboration has embroidered brand impact not just in reality but virtually as well.

According to Roblox 2021 financial results, it reported its revenue has increased 127% drastically to \$454.1 million and its daily active users were 46.6 million which has soared by 28% since July last year. Equally important, in accordance with monitoring tools for Fornite, it typically showed there are 6-12 million daily active users.

Advertising agencies begin to take this opportunity and make shifts as this new platform has proven remarkably effective. Hence, some companies already offer advertising solutions that deliver in-world ads. For example, Ferenci (2022) said that, *“Bidstack helps brands place their ads in virtual environments. They work with developers to place ads in games and provide real-time performance reporting to advertisers”*.

This immersive and fast-growing medium offers marketers plenty of room for experimentation. Although the concept of Metaverse remains unclear yet many advertisers are still ready to dive their heads down and willing to take the risks to capitalise on it.



Figure 3. Ocean Outdoor follows the hype and their clients are allowed to bring the OOH (out-of-home) media into video games and metaverse. (Hickman, 2021)

In summary, we could know how psychology, capitalism and Metaverse seems like a cycle all together. From agencies getting to understand and tackle consumers' emotions and behaviour to generating various strategies till competent to explore a wider platform to distribute commodities. These data outburst caused the brands to gather up their consumers from multiple platforms and planned to conquer the market. Flunk advertisements could be seen everywhere but consumers still need to be able to identify the real value either on advertisements or products. After this research, the author wonders how far could advertising go as it's been time for advertisement to switch mediums just to fit the audiences endlessly. From printed advertisements in the form of a booklet by William Caxton since 1472 to newspaper advertisement, billboards (and all of the out-of-home media) to digital media such as radio and

television, even now online advertising (personalisation) has been impactful to both parties. When the Metaverse concept was introduced to the public, it makes me to wonder, what will advertising look like in this unknown yet not fully developed platform? However, we could all tell there are many potentialities to scrutinize for advertisers to explore. As Jef I. Richards once mentioned, “*Creative without strategy is called ‘art.’ Creative with strategy is called ‘advertising.’*” Thus, how could advertisers deal with ad blockers either for apps or online in this era?

The conceptualization of either Web 3.0 or Metaverse would be my research question next year as it is a brand new yet unknown sector to be discovered and the digital advertising stage is still evolving. How could advertisers step up into this game without knowing how long will the digital period last? With all the unknown possibilities, I seek to work on these research questions next year.

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