

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SEXUALITY IN ADVERTISING

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Abstract:

Whether it's subtle allusions or explicit images, whether it sells chocolate, cars or condoms, sexuality is more and more present in nowadays advertising. In this context, a series of questions become legitimate to be asked: Does sex sell? Are a provocative attitude, few clothes and explicit gestures efficient? Can they determine us to prefer a certain brand and buy it? In our study we analyze the Romanian college educated young people's perceptions and opinions towards sexuality in advertising. The results were obtained through a qualitative research. More exactly, we organized two homogenous focus groups taking into account gender (one was made up of women and another of men), age (between 23 and 25 year-old), residence (urban environment) and education level (university studies). The conclusions are in line with the scientific literature and emphasize the difference between men and women regarding the perception towards sexuality in advertising.

Keywords: advertising, sexuality, nudity, young people's perceptions, perfume advertisement

Introduction

Some of the experts in advertising consider sexuality to be one of the "magic recipes" that always works. "Sex sells" is one of the most famous advertising axioms. The main reason is that sex is one of the human being's main motivations, and the commercials that resort to sexuality or eroticism have higher chances to draw attention and to peek's the audience interest or to generate a favorable attitude towards the brand. (Gunter, 2002; Băbuț, 2013).

We can say that a advertising message resorts to sexuality when one of the following elements is present: partial or complete nudity, characters provocatively dressed (lingerie), provocative or seductive facial expressions, verbal references to sex, suggested or explicit sexual acts

between two adults (De Pelsmacker, Geuens et al, 2001; Gunter, 2002).

The process of conceiving and using advertising messages with sexual content must take into consideration the placement of the promoted brand, the target consumers' segment (socio-demographic characteristics, values, life styles), the values and the cultural rules of the society where the campaign is carried out, but also the legislation of the country in question regarding this subject (Petre and Iliescu, 2005). On the other hand, nowadays consumers need something more "visible" than they used to in the past (in the 1900's showing the female models' hands or ankles was synonym with the partial nudity of the nowadays models, from the attraction perspective), in order to be attracted to and have their curiosity

aroused. All these are mainly due to the changes suffered by all the cultural environments such as books, theatre, music, movies, television, radio and internet (Severn, Belch et al, 1990; Jurca, 2010). The values and cultural rules have a major impact on the ethical principles of society and the advertising messages that resort to sexuality and eroticism take into account these beliefs and standards in order to defy the rules or to respect them (Băbuț, 2014; Todt, Dabija, 2009). Thus, we can identify numerous advertising campaigns that defied or violated the rules and values of society as a whole or those of a certain socio-cultural category of people, becoming subject to discussion and benefiting by a free coverage in the traditional mass-media as well as in the on-line one. The effects of this kind of „campaigns” are similar to those of a classic one in terms of popularity, many of them becoming viral. In 1980 Calvin Klein broadcasted a famous but in the same time controversial campaign, created by Richard Avedon. In this commercial, a 15 year old Brooke Shields is dressed in a casual shirt and a pair of jeans while asking the audience a question-statement with a sexual hint, “flirting” at the same time with the camera: “You want to know what comes between me and my Calvin’s? Nothing” (vanityfair.com). Even if the TV commercial was banned by the CBS Network, its goal was accomplished: the fashion industry was challenged from a cultural point of view and Calvin Klein sold over 2 million pairs of jeans in one month (chitustefan.ro). Another famous example is the campaign carried out by Calvin Klein in the USA in 1995. The campaign presented teenagers in provocative instances. Even if in this commercials the teenagers were not completely naked, the way in which all these messages were created was consider similar to the one used for pornographic creations and the reactions generated were strong among

mass-media and customers’ associations. The proportions of this scandal determined some shops that were selling the CK brand to ask the producer to stop the campaign. Yet, this campaign led to a very high presence of the Calvin Klein brand in media, which determined an increase of the brand’s notoriety. The series of controversial commercials doesn’t stop here and in 2010 the Calvin Klein campaign has Lara Stone as a protagonist. She is presented in an indecent instance together with three male models. The upper side of her body was supported against one of them, while another one was holding her in his arms. All of them were scarcely dressed, almost naked. The images with this actress were banned in Australia by the Advertising Standards Authority because it was considered that this commercial promoted rape and violence against women (dailymail.com). Dolce & Gabbana is another brand known for its advertising messages that resort to sexuality. A campaign from 2007 created a huge scandal in Spain and Italy and the billboards were rapidly withdrawn. The latter were presenting in the foreground a woman lying and on top of her a man partially naked holding her arms tightly on the ground. From certain angles the woman seemed as if she wanted to get free, and her lips intensively painted seemed to ask for help. In the background, one could see three other men, watching the previous scene, waiting for their “turn”. Barbara Polastrin, the Italian minister for equality of chances stated that the image represented “a group rape instigation” as well as a woman’s degradation. At the same time, the Italian unions protested against the shameful Dolce & Gabbana commercial, threatening with the boycotting of the two designers’ products if they didn’t give up the shocking photos (9am.ro).

In spite of the controversy, the advertising messages that resort to sexuality and nudity are used for the

promotion of a wide range of products (automobiles, alcoholic drinks, perfumes, lingerie, jewelries, etc.). The results of the studies conducted to analyze the impact on the customers of the commercials with erotic content are different. Thus, the general conclusion is that the nudity and erotic content of the commercial messages draw attention (Alexander, Judd, 1979; Severn, Belch et al, 1990). On the other hand, the efficiency of the messages that resort to sexuality depends on the existence of a close connection between the product or the brand promoted and the sexual content of the message, the brands being placed as a way of increasing attractiveness, intimacy and romance (for example, lingerie, perfumes, personal care items, fashion, alcoholic drinks, condoms) (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, 1996; Reichter, 2013).

There are also disadvantages of using sexuality in advertising. Thus, in the case of certain categories of products (food items, coffee, cleaning products etc.) which are not directly related to the erotic content of the message, the attention is more likely to be focused on the sexual stimuli than on the promoted brand or on the informative content of the message and as a consequence, the reminding scores for the commercials are low (Severn, Belch et al, 1990).

According to studies, the impact of erotic stimuli used in advertising messages varies according to the consumers' gender. The consumers' reactions to the advertising messages using nude people of the same sex were more negative than the ones using nude people of opposite sex. Thus, female nudity used in advertising messages determined negative reactions from women, while men's reactions were positive (LaTour, 1990). On the other hand, men do not appreciate male nudity in advertising, while women's reactions are favorable regarding the presence of partially

undressed, but not entirely nude men in advertising (LaTour and Henthorne, 1994).

Literature Review

Types of sexual content in advertising

The main types of sexual stimuli in advertising, as identified by scientific literature are the following:

1. The woman – a benchmark for beauty and a source of attraction

According to different studies (Frith, Cheng et al, 2004; Hung, Li et al, 2007; Chan and Cheng, 2012), we are able to identify four beauty types of female characters: the classic woman: women who are a bit older and have an elegant appearance, very charming and sophisticated; the sexy woman (sexy kitty): female characters who usually wear sexy clothes; the nice woman/the girl next door: women who look young and cute and are active; the fashionable woman: women who usually wear trendy clothes and have a careless attitude (Leung and Chan, 2014).

2. Nudity. A series of the human body's features are idealized and worshiped at the expense of others. Thus, the attention is focused towards the woman's body and less attention is given to her face, without the existence of an obvious sexual behavior (Gunter, 2002). As for men, virility is no longer used to confront enemies, but rather as a way to feel and generate excitement (Iliescu and Petre, 2004).

3. Sexual behavior – A series of characters are shown, during different stages of sexual intercourse, with the description of different variations of sexual behavior. Within this category we can discern four classes of pornographic material:

The sexual materials depict the kind of sex performed by couples, the one in which a participant has multiple partners or group sex. These can include people of different genders or of the same gender, while presenting heterosexuality, as well as

homosexuality. Usually though, heterosexual relationships between men and women are shown (Reichert, 2003) or even involving minors – child pornography (Merskin, 2004);

Violent sexual materials – depict rape and other cases of physical abuse of a person in a sexual context (Gunter, 2002, pp.20-21);

Non-violent sexual materials – illustrate belittlement, domination, lowering or humiliation, the woman seen as an object subordinated to man's interest (Gunter, 2002) but also illustrates the masochistic woman who has abandoned passivity in order to try taking over control (Iliescu and Petre, 2004);

Non-violent and non-degrading sexual materials depict a couple having sex, but without there being violence or constraint. Also, within this category we can find provocative body movements, sexualized language and sounds, kissing, hugging, foreplay, the simulation of oral or anal sex, stripping and voyeurism (Gunter, 2002).

4. Contextual factors. They refer to different movie and production settings. For example, a beach bonfire, a striptease club, a bedroom, black and white images, music with a slow and suffocating rhythm and dim light effects (Reichert, 2002).

5. Sexual referents. They deal with verbal elements or a mix of verbal and visual elements that appear within a certain message. For example, sexual hints and double meaning messages (with two or more understandings, one being of a sexual nature) (Reichert, 2002).

6. Sexual embeds and symbolism. They refer to the usage of barely discernible images of an erotic nature (the word SEX, images of naked women, orgies and other sexual activities) „integrated” into advertising images by using special photographic techniques, which address the subconscious and the repressed sexual tendencies (Băbuț, 2014). Within this

category we can also find the usage of different objects with shapes that symbolize sex organs – rackets, bottles, but also object that symbolize intercourse – a key inserted into a lock (Reichert, 2002).

Nudity and pornography

Nudity, which is one of the fundamental types of sexuality in advertising (Reichert and Lambiase 2003), is defined as „the amount of clothing a model wears and the way she/he wears it” (Huang and Lowry, 2012, p. 444) or as „the sum and style of the clothing worn by models in commercials” (Soley and Reid, 1988, p. 961; Reichert, Lambiase et al, 1999, p. 8).

According to scientific literature (Nelson and Paek, 2005; Huang and Lowry, 2012), we can identify five levels of nudity in advertising, as follows: no nudity (the model is fully dressed); subtle nudity (the model's body, for example the legs and the upper part of the chest – are slightly revealed); moderate nudity (the model's shoulders, thighs or chest are exposed); partial nudity (lingerie, bikini, bathing suits and images that suggest the model being topless); nudity (a nude body, even one that is slightly covered by a towel or a piece of clothing).

Pornography is seen as an exaggerated form of nudity, to which a certain behaviour is added, as well as a physical interaction between the models used in advertising (Amyx and Amyx, 2011; Reichert and Ramirez Artemio, 2000). In scientific literature the difficulty of defining pornography is emphasized, taking into consideration the different ways this concept was approached in the studies undertaken (D'Orlando, 2009). On the other hand, the historical, social and cultural context also has to be subject to analysis. The perception of pornography has changed with time and is different from one culture to another. The images considered to be pornographic ten years ago are no

longer seen this way nowadays. The cultural, moral and religious values of the individual or his belonging to a group will influence the way he/she stands regarding pornography, which can make different people part of the same country and age to have different definitions for what pornography represents (D'Orlando, 2009).

According to Rea (2001, p. 123), the definitions of what pornography is fall into six different types, namely: (i) those that define it as the sale of sex for profit, (ii) those that define it as a form of bad art, (iii) those that define it as portraying men or women as, as only, or only as sexual beings/objects, (iv) those that define it as a form of obscenity, (v) those that define it as a form of oppression, and (vi) those that define it as material that is intended to produce or has the effect of producing sexual arousal.

The essence of pornography is the fact that its main objective is sexual arousal. This is the way that an explicit sexual material – visual, in writing, in speaking – presents sexual activity or the exposing of the private parts. Pornography can be split up into two categories: hard-core (the private parts are exposed in a very explicit manner) and soft-core (different parts of the human body are exposed more delicately, with certain artistic claims) (Baur and Crooks, 2007; D'Orlando, 2009). In fact, over the years, several different trends or concepts have emerged, like “porno-chic”, the “Lolita effect” and “woman as an object” (McNair, 2013; Durham, 2009; Stankiewicz and Rosselli, 2008).

The concept of “porno-chic” is supposed to be a representation of pornography in the non-pornographic art and culture and can be seen in a commercial, a play, a movie scene, all of which do not intend to be pornographic (McNair, 2002). Moreover, this concept is thought as a parody, an homage to pornography or an enquiry into it (McNair, 2013). In the 1990's,

“porno-chic” also gained notoriety in written media. Different magazines of the time published articles about sexuality and fashion, transforming photographic pornography into a trend (McNair, 2002).

Defining the concept of the “Lolita effect” takes into account the sexualization of adolescent and preadolescent girls, with implications regarding their physical and physiological development (Durham, 2009; Star and Ferguson, 2012). Starting with Vladimir Nabokov's “Lolita”, the concept was externalized, with “little nymphs” appearing in TV programs or movies, as well as in video games, music or magazines. When used in advertising, the “Lolita effect” sends out an advertising message that is disturbing for girls and women, the message that they always have to be sexually available, to constantly think about sex, to be willing to be dominated and even sexually aggressed and to be aware that they will always be looked upon as sexual objects (Merish, 2004).

The concept of “woman as an object” refers to the sexual victimization of women. The body positions, facial expression and sexual relationships that appear in advertising are many times originated from pornography (Stankiewicz and Rosselli, 2008). Different previous studies have claimed that there is a close bond between the sexual act and aggressiveness, with Freud considering that the desire to hurt and to get hurt at the hands of your partner is a normal part of heterosexual relationships (Baron, 1974; Gunter, 2002).

Research purpose

The purpose of this research was to identify the Romanian young people's perceptions towards the usage of sexuality in advertising. The research objectives were:

- Identifying young people's perceptions towards advertising

nowadays, but also the way they see it in the future.

- Emphasizing the way young people define sexuality in advertising.
- Emphasizing the extent of knowing the concepts of “porno chic”, “Lolita Effect”, “woman as an object” and the way all these concepts are defined by young people.
- Identifying the advantages offered by the usage of sexuality in advertising.
- Identifying the categories of products that they believe are appropriate for a sexual approach.
- Emphasizing young people’s perceptions towards the advertising campaigns created by Coco Mademoiselle (Chanel brand) and for Guilty Black (Gucci brand).

Research methodology

The research method used was the focus group. This method allows the researcher to obtain information from people that have certain features and are able to deliver quality information within a guided discussion in order to understand a certain theme of discussion (Krueger and Casey, 2005). Thus, our purpose was to learn about the respondents’ perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards the usage of sexuality in advertising and at the same time analyze their reactions.

Within this research we organized two focus groups of six people each. Both of them were homogenous taking into account gender (one was made up of women and another of men), age (between 23 and 25 year-old), residence (urban environment) and education level (university studies). A week before organizing the focus group we drew up a list with the potential participants and we sent messages through social media in order to contact them. After the confirming their participation, one day before the reunion we sent a reminder message.

The focus groups took place in a coffee house where the participants felt

comfortable and shared their opinions at ease. The meeting lasted for 1 hour and 20 minutes. The interview guide followed a natural and logical order in accordance with the chosen objectives. During the reunion the participants were not pressured in finding a common agreement, but they were let to express themselves freely. The response rate was 100% and all the discussions were video recorded.

Results

The analysis of the Focus Group made up of female respondents

The majority of young women had a defensive or provocative attitude, with their eyes pointed at the moderator, their hands crossed over their legs or standing freely on the chair, their legs crossed over and on the whole with a rigid body position, sitting against the chair. S1 was smiling, attentive and determined, while also being emotional, surprised and uncertain about her opinions, frequently addressing questions with the phrase “I don’t know”. S2 also was smiling and attentive, but a lot more determined, punctual and relaxed. There were moments when she was fairly uncertain. S3 was interested in the topic, but her answers were nervous (by repeating the sound “aaa”, showing a discrete smile). S4 was smiling, emotional and surprised (she used the sound “hmm”). S5 was attentive when giving answers as was S1 and determined and punctual like S2. S6 was confident most of the time, conclusive and analytical, with a tendency to follow the camera, but also attentive and smiling.

When asked the question “How would you characterize the present day advertising? What about the one in the future?” most of the young women considered the present advertising as aggressive (4 out of 6), while the other two respondents considered it creative and manipulative. The majority of the young women (5 out of 6) believed that in the future advertising would be

different, two of them foreseeing it as extravagant or SF, while the rest of them imagining it more consumer orientated, less aggressive and more creative. Just one particular respondent considered that there will be no need for advertising in the future.

Regarding the efficiency of advertising campaigns carried out by different companies/ brands, the majority of young women (4 out of 6) considered that this efficiency varies according to the promoted product and/or brand. One of the young women believed that the efficiency of an advertising campaign is directly related to the connection established between

the client and the promoted brand while another one added that it can also be influenced by the attractiveness level of the campaign and how interesting it is perceived to be by the customer.

As far as defying the concept of “sexuality in advertising” is concerned, the majority of young women associated it with nudity (5 out of 6), intimacy (4 out of 6) and attraction (3 out of 6). Two of the participants also thought about curiosity or a “taboo subject”. The rest of them also defined sexuality in advertising with the help of words like sensuality, eroticism, courage, flirt, exaggeration and aggressiveness.

Table 1.

The concept of “sexuality in advertising” as interpreted by the young women participating in the focus group

Question	The answers given by the young women respondents					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
What do you think about when hearing the concept of “sexuality in advertising”?	Nudity, intimate scenarios, courage	Sexual intimate content, nudity	Sexuality, intimacy, eroticism, “public sexuality”	Attractive characters, flirt, intimacy, nudity	Nudity, exaggeration, aggressiveness	Curiosity, attraction, something banned, nudity

The young women encountered difficulties in defining the concepts of “porno-chic”, the “Lolita effect” or “woman as an object”, but they personalized their answers starting from the associations they made for each concept.

Half of the young women (3 out of 6) defined “porno-chic” as sensuality and two of them associated it with a female typology. The concept of “porno-chic” was also defined through a lot of nudity and explicit moves. The majority of young women (5 out of 6) defined the “Lolita effect” as a young under-age

woman, lacking in innocence, even vulgar. Most of the young women (5 out of 6) associated the concept of “woman as an object” with the help of more or less different sexual feminine prototypes.

Being asked about the advantages of using sexuality in advertising, the majority of young women (5 out of 6) considered that drawing attention and influencing the customers subliminally (especially men) is sexuality’s main advantage. S4 did not answer the question.

Table 2.

The interpretation given by the young women participating in the focus-group to the concepts of “porno-chic”, the “Lolita effect”, “woman as an object”

	The answers given by the young women respondents					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Porno-chic	Luxury brands, lingerie, sensuality and elegance	Sensuality, a good-looking, young, tall, beautiful and supple woman	Sensuality – feminine typology, young woman	No answer	No answer	A lot of nudity, explicit moves
Lolita effect	Feminine typology – young woman	A movie, a book, under-age young woman, 14 year old, less innocent, more vulgar	An under-age young woman	No answer	An under-age vulgar young woman	An under-age, naive, with a suggested innocence young woman
Woman as an object	The housewife – prototype	Different female prototypes	Different female prototypes	Different female prototypes	No answer	Pornography

According to all the participants, using sexuality in advertising is more suitable for luxury products, as well as for the common ones, especially lingerie, cosmetics, perfumes, but also shoes, accessories, drinks and chocolate. The participants were more relaxed while answering this question, smiling more and reaching a consensus in a very short time.

The Chanel advertising campaign for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume

During the screening of the commercial, the young women were attentive, maintaining the same body position and amusing themselves at the more intriguing scenes. The majority of the young women (5 out of 6) have not seen this Chanel commercial before. Only S3 said that she knew the commercial beforehand, it being one of her favorites. Most of the young women (4 out of 6) confessed that the commercial had aroused their curiosity and captivated them. The other two young women associated the

commercial with the idea of sensuality, elegance and dynamism.

When asked “What is the first feeling that this commercial conveys to you?”, most of them (5 out of 6) responded “self-confidence”, in the sense of independence and self-trust in your inner power. S6 mentioned “discovery”, believing the commercial to be elegant and very dynamic.

In regards to the creative approach, S3 thought that this commercial was appropriate for a perfume, because a story is more captivating than the sole presentation of the perfume. S4 did not express her opinion, but she non-verbally approved S3’s opinion. S6 considered the approach to be very suitable for a perfume by having the ideal ingredients – the actress, the setting and the perfume.

All of the young women said that they would not buy the perfume as a result of watching this commercial, although three of them mentioned that the presence of a specific actress or

actor could have possibly determined them to try the perfume.

The Gucci advertising campaign for the Guilty Black perfume

During the screening of the Guilty Black commercial, the young women were mostly attentive, maintaining a constant body position, they were amused at the more intriguing scenes and overall, they were surprised by the fast mise-en-scene of the action. The majority of young women (5 out of 6) did not see beforehand this Gucci commercial. Again, only S3 confessed to knowing the commercial beforehand. Half of the young women perceived the advertising message as being tempting and highly erotic, one of them associating it with the idea of a "forbidden thing", while two of them refrained from expressing any sort of opinion.

As for the feeling conveyed by this commercial, the opinions were unanimous: "forbidden pleasures". "Self-confidence" and "the game of seduction" were also mentioned.

When asked if they consider this creative approach as being appropriate for a perfume, all of the young women answered affirmatively, although some of them noticed the higher level of aggressiveness. The majority of young women (5 out of 6) said that they would not buy the perfume as a result of this advertising campaign. Only one participant (S2) was willing to buy the perfume after watching this commercial.

The analysis of the Focus Group made up of male respondents

The majority of young men adopted specific positions – their body position being either bent backward, upright or bent forward, with their legs spread apart, crossed over one another or with one leg held higher than the other, with their hands crossed over, put over the mouth, or holding up the head and looking directly at the moderator, the other participants or simply

throughout the room or out of the window. During the discussions, the young men oscillated in their verbal as well as non-verbal behaviour. S1 asked some additional questions, using a civilized and polite tone and he was mostly concentrated, self-confident and precise. S2 tried to answer as precisely as possible when asked about the discussed topic, while being eager, ironic relaxed and funny, as well as self-confident. S3 was hesitant, slow and limited in ideas, with rare moments of certainty and fun. S4 was interested, cooperative and funny, but with a slightly confusing behaviour, by constantly moving. S5 was self-confident, relaxed, expressed his ideas clearly, but with a careless attitude regarding the discussed topic. S6 left the impression of an either bored or apprehensive person, by expressing his ideas in a concise but limited manner.

When asked to describe the advertising going on nowadays, the majority of young men (4 out of 6) considered that current advertising is characterized by brain-washing. The other two thought that advertising is trying to attract attention while also being rudimentary, as is the public it addresses. Two young men (S3 and S6) considered that future advertising will depend on the way society will evolve. Other two young men (S1 and S2) believed that advertising will be everywhere, will become more intuitive and will take more notice of the consumer. S3 and S4 disagreed, with one of them considering that advertising will disappear (S5), while the other believed that it will certainly not disappear (S4).

On the subject of how effective the advertising campaigns conducted by different companies/brands are, most of the young men (4 out of 6) considered them as being effective. Three young men thought that advertising is effective and beneficial for the product and brand, but that it also has negative effects on the consumers (manipulating

them). Two of the young men (S1, S6) did not express their opinion regarding the efficiency of the advertising campaigns.

When asked what do they associate „sexuality in advertising” with, two young men (S1 and S4) mentioned „a way of increasing sales and profit”.

The other young men thought about attention, attraction, naked people, manipulation, theft, lying, waste of time, lack of knowledge, something primitive and subliminal stimuli. Basically, their ideas crossed one another, but not enough to reach a consensus.

Table 3.

The concept of “sexuality in advertising” as interpreted by the young men participating in the focus group

Question	The answers given by the male respondents					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
What do you think about when you hear the concept of “sexuality in advertising”?	Money, selling, subconscious	Attraction, attention, courage	Nudity, globalization, a sexual act	Manipulation, pleasure, selling	Theft, lie, waste of time	Lack of knowledge, something primitive, a subliminal message

The young men did not know how to exactly define the concepts of “porno-chic”, the “Lolita effect” or “woman as an object”, but they personalized their answers imaginatively, and on the whole, all the concepts were interpreted from a sexual point of view. The three participants that answered the question choose to define the “woman as an object” concept through the sexual abusing of a woman. One of the participants defined the “Lolita effect” through pedophilia – a young girl being abused by an older man, while another participant through the resemblance with a female stripper. One of the participants defined the concept of “porno-chic” as being something pornographic, but chic, elegant. **S1** changed his body, hands and legs positions and listened to the discussion carefully, but did not intervene. **S5** and **S6** were distracted and uninterested in the discussion, but general laughter

could be heard after hearing the 3 concepts.

Being asked what they think the advantages of using sexuality in advertising are, most of the young men (4 out of 6) mentioned the ability of attracting attention and of drawing interest through appealing to a primal instinct. At the same time, three of the young men also mentioned the ability to manipulate through the exploiting of weaknesses, frustrations and of the human sex-appeal. Two of the young men present did not wish to answer the question.

In regards to the categories of products for which sexuality would be a suitable approach, two of the young men mentioned condoms and another mentioned an automobile brand. The other young men did not give any answers.

Table 4.

The interpretation given by the young men participating in the focus-group to the concepts of “porno-chic”, the “Lolita effect”, “woman as an object”

	The answers given by the male respondents					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Porno-chic	No answer	No answer	Something pornographic but chic, elegant	No answer	No answer	No answer
Lolita effect	No answer	Pedophilia – a young girl being abused by an older man	No answer	Female stripper	No answer	No answer
Woman as an object	No answer	The sexual abusing of a woman	Sexual abuse	A woman being treated like she is just a piece of meat, sexual abuse	No answer	No answer

The Chanel advertising campaign for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume

During the screening of the commercial for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume, the young men were mostly attentive, maintaining the same body position, being amused at the more intriguing scenes and ironical towards other ones. Most of the young men (5 out of 6) were not familiar with the commercial. Only S2 confessed to knowing the commercial beforehand.

Half of the young men (3 out of 6) did not have any reactions about the commercial. S2 perceived the commercial as being made by a second-hand director – it was too long and too similar to a movie. S4 thought that the commercial was too long, exaggerated and that the people involved in making it tried too much (“they went head over heels in making the commercial”). S5 was ironic when asking “where can we buy it from”, emphasizing the idea that advertising is “manipulating and deceitful”. None of the young men mentioned any feelings they could associate with the advertising message for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume.

When asked if they consider this approach as a creative one for a perfume, half of the young men (3 out of 6) responded affirmatively. S1 remained silent and witnessed the discussion in a reserved manner. S2 did not understand the connection between the commercial and the perfume (“What does it have to do with the perfume?”). S3 explained the commercial as he saw it – “how would a woman go about things – she puts on some perfume, goes out and a bunch of men on motorcycles follow her”. S4 believes that the commercial is too exaggerated for a perfume, thus it is inappropriate. S5 and S6 think that the commercial is suitable for a women’s perfume.

Two of the young men consider that an advertising campaign is not enough to determine people to buy a specific perfume. The reasons cited were financial (the lack of money), as well as social ones (choosing a perfume is a “delicate” matter). One of the young men said that he would buy his girlfriend such a perfume, in order to surprise her. The other young men (3 out of 6) reacted to the other’s commentaries but

did not make any of their own, only amusing themselves.

The Gucci advertising campaign for the Guilty Black perfume

When asked if they know the commercial, all of the young men responded negatively.

In regards to their reactions/feelings towards this commercial, the majority of young men (4 out of 6) was amused, looked at one another, but did not have anything specific to say. S2 answered confidently, but citing some irrelevant explanations that he did not have any specific reaction. The fact that the commercial had bothered him ensued from his speech. S4 considered that this commercial was better than the one for Coco Mademoiselle – shorter, with a stronger message, but he did not understand the connection between the commercial and the perfume (“wear this perfume and you’ll get some action?”).

Most of them (4 out of 6) did not believe this approach as being a suitable one for a perfume. One of the young men thought that there is too much violence for a perfume commercial, while another considered that the beginning was not interesting and that afterwards there is no connection being made with the idea of a perfume.

Being asked if they would buy the perfume as a result of watching this commercial, most of the young men (5 out of 6) responded negatively. Three of them responded non-verbally with the help of a non-approving movement of the head, and another considered that no commercial could determine you to buy a perfume, without taking into consideration money, with the fragrance of the perfume being the deciding factor. S1 thought that those who make the connection between the commercial and the “Sin City” movie could be interested in trying the perfume, but not buying it.

Conclusions

The perception of young people, both men and women, from the urban environment and with a college degree, is different. While young women consider present advertising as being aggressive, young men see it as a way of manipulation. The creative dimension of advertising was also emphasized, but not by the majority of respondents.

The opinions regarding the evolution of advertising in the future are various: extravagant, creative, consumer orientated, adapted to society. We notice the fact that aggressiveness and manipulation do not characterize future advertising, so we can draw the conclusion that these attributes are not desired by the young consumers.

Young men as well as young women consider that advertising campaigns fulfill their goals and are efficient although they do not always serve the consumer’s benefit as well. The concept of “sexuality in advertising” is differently understood by young women and men. Young women associated sexuality in advertising with nudity, intimacy and attraction, all of these representing the shapes of sexuality in advertising, while young men also noticed the effects of using sexuality in advertising. They associated this concept with “a way of increasing sales and profit”, a way of drawing attention and an instrument of manipulation.

Although they did not know how to define the concepts of „porno-chic”, the „Lolita effect” and „woman as an object”, the young women showed interest in the topic and offered detailed answers. The young men had a completely opposite attitude, only half of them trying to give answers while also limiting their input to only two concepts. One thing worth noting is that all of the three men associated the „woman as an object” concept with the idea of sexual abuse, unlike the women who thought

about different female prototypes (including the housewife woman).

In regards to the advantages of using sexuality in advertising, the young men and women shared the same opinion. Thus, they mentioned the ability of attracting attention and exploiting the instinctive nature of the human being as the most important advantage.

The young women considered that sexuality is a suitable approach for lingerie, cosmetic products, perfumes, while young men believed that using sexuality is useful in commercials for condoms. Half of the young men did not answer this question.

The two advertising messages created for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume (a Chanel brand) and the Guilty Black perfume (a Gucci brand) was perceived differently by the young women and men. By emphasizing nudity and a subtle game of seduction, the commercial for the Coco Mademoiselle perfume aroused the young women's curiosity and captivated them, determining them to associate the perfume with self-confidence, sensuality and elegance. The young men had a completely opposite opinion by evaluating the commercial negatively, thinking it was too long and rather exaggerated, unreal. Although considering the approach to be suitable for a women's perfume, neither the

women nor the men expressed any intention of buying it as a result of watching the commercial.

In the process of creating the commercial for the Guilty Black perfume Gucci broke through boundaries by placing it in the "porno-chic" trend. While the young women perceived the message as one full of eroticism and associated it with the idea of "forbidden pleasures", the young men were amused, bothered by the message or did not understand its connection with the perfume. We point out the fact that Gucci's approach was considered appropriate by women and inappropriate by men. Once again, the message could not determine buying the product.

The results of this research confirmed a series of opinions expressed by the scientific literature. Moreover, we notice that young Romanian women with a college degree are emancipated and have the ability to openly discuss sexuality, while men are more apprehensive. A possible explication for this situation is the fact that the moderator of the focus group was a woman. For future research, we believe wise to undertake a more ample study which should take into account a larger number of independent focus groups – made up of men and women – split up into different age categories and levels of education.

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