

Rationale: A formal letter informing and persuading how women are degraded and objectified through the utilization of advertisements

For our IB HL Language and Literature English class, we have been studying Part 2: language and mass communication. In this topic, we experimented with advertising and gender stereotypes, and how our understanding of communicating with advertising has increased our knowledge regarding the distinction between genders. I have chose to work with the topic on the code of femininity, to demonstrate the unyielding power of men. Through the portrayal of headless and faceless women, I was able to emphasize the lack of individuality owned by women. To allow in-depth analysis and knowledge of this subject, I chose to compose a letter sending to the editor of Cosmopolitan magazine, arguing the immoral act of publishing advertisements that degrade and demean women.

To successfully communicate my purpose to the audience, I have chosen two advertisements as an example. Firstly, the Tom Ford advertisement is utilized to represent the objectification of women. It focuses on how women are visualized in advertisements that portray them as sex toys to create arousal in men. The Duncan Quinn Suit advertisement is analyzed to further our knowledge of degrading women. Both advertisements depict a visual of a headless woman, supporting the argument that eliminating the model's face is equal to eliminating the individuality of each woman.

In conclusion, throughout this unit of study, I have learned that advertising can create a larger impact on ones perception. The specific text type of a letter allowed myself to provide a powerful message in a realistic and formal manner. Through specifically studying the behavior and quality differences in genders portrayed through advertising, I have concluded that society will continue to depict women as vulnerable and men as dominating and overpowering.

Word Count: 283

Women's Rights Organization
135 Morrissey Blvd. Boston, MA 02125
617 929 2000
P.O. Box 55981 Boston, MA
02205-83456

Kate White, Editor of Cosmopolitan Magazine
Cosmopolitan
300 West 57th Street, 38th floor
New York NY 10019

Dear Kate White,

My name is _____, the executive director of Women's Rights Organization (WRO). Our group is working with the United Nations Women (UN. Women) organization, as a representative for the voices of all women that has yet to be heard. I am writing to you, motivated and determined, to make a crucial change to our rapidly changing world of media, regarding the problematic advertisements which Cosmopolitan generously publishes each year to be viewed by a number of men and women of all ages. These advertisements unconsciously strip away the individuality of each woman and allow society to view women as nothing but exposed sex objects.

In Cosmopolitan's 2007 September issue, a Tom Ford advertisement was published, promoting its first fragrance launched for men. This appalling advertisement successfully promoted arousal in men by creating a sexual image utilizing the fragrance bottle placed between the woman's breasts. The emphasis was on her sweaty and oily exposed chest, which was barely covered with her hands, creating an immediate provocative reaction. In the photo, we can assume that she is lying down on her back. Her hands are pushing her breasts closer together, inevitably creating a perfect cleavage for the product to sit on, and her lips are widely opened in an oval shape, implying an orgasm. The fragrance bottle, representing a man's private part, is strategically located in the center of her pushed breasts, giving just the right amount of kinkiness. Her widely opened mouth is no longer viewed as an orgasm, but rather implies a forceful action of oral sex. At this point, the relationship between man and woman is clear; the woman is the victim being seduced by a man hovering over her upper body.

At first glance, this advertisement may appear as nothing but normal. However, this advertisement implies more than what is being seen to the audience. The headless woman portraying the action of sex, is degraded by the elimination of her face, suggesting that in the eyes of men, she is identical to all women. Creating an advertisement with a headless woman, allow men to imagine them participating in a

sexual activity without judging the beauty of the model's face. Furthermore, this diminishes the identity and personality of the individual model and allows society to objectify women and view them as vulnerable, defenseless and bare.

We strongly believe that this is a serious issue that must be managed, not ignored nor avoided. People have become numb and blinded by the effects advertising can bring in our every day choices and decisions. It can "unconsciously" (Kilbourne 59) impact our point of view and outlook on life. Therefore, Cosmopolitan must filter which advertisements are being presented and which should not be perceived. This is not the message we want to communicate with our society in which cracks and flaws exist.

We do not want our society to mature and grow in an environment where women are constantly and unnoticeably dehumanized and deemed as sex objects. If this issue is not confronted, we will drown in the pool of immoralities, a place where the segregation between men and women will become clear, and where men will forcefully dominate and control the thoughts and actions of all women.

A Duncan Quinn Suit Advertisement, featured in Cosmopolitan's November 2008 issue, propels a perfect example of a helpless woman under the absolute control of a man, who looks satisfied and confident. The woman is positioned lying above an 'expensive' car, naked, with a revealing lingerie. The tie around her neck holds a powerful meaning and represents the relationship shared between the man and the woman. The necktie gripped firmly by the man, symbolizes a leash, which illustrates that the woman is valued less than human. We can further support this argument by her invisible face, in which we have no reference to her personal opinions, or attitudes. She is no more than a sex toy being lusted among the ignorance of men and vigorously towed by the overwhelming power.

The advertisement achieves to scream in our face saying, "buy this suit now, and you can be like him, rich, professional, charismatic, and have all women under your control".

Why should women be held accountable for being judged upon as skanky, low, easy, or cheap? When in fact, advertisements should be responsible for such perceptions and insights.

We plead with you, that this vile crime must be put to a stop. We implore that the next time a decision to publish a certain advertisement is made; to ponder upon the ultimate purpose and goal it sends to over 3 million people around the world.

It only takes one ad to make a difference and drastically altar the perception of an individual. And it takes only one decision to prevent that from happening.

As the leading women's magazine in the United States, the UN women and our organization believe that Cosmopolitan has a responsibility to the beauty that lies within each woman. You have the responsibility to emphasize the positive qualities and traits of women. Do not take advantage of this power to change the perceptions of society, by publishing advertisements that suggest the lack of individuality and humanity in women. The Women's Right Organization and the UN Women, have a vision that by small and simple steps, we will achieve to prevent and hopefully diminish the segregation between men and women, to one day create a society where all men and women are joined in unity.

We hope that you have taken our letter into consideration and hope that you will act upon what you know to be true and righteous,

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Manager of Women's Rights Organization

Michele Bachelet

Executive Director of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Word Count: 923

Works Cited

Duncan Quinn Suit. Advertisement. *Trend Hunter Marketing*. 31 Dec. 2008. Web. 23

May 2012. <[http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/duncan-quinn-suit-ad
depicting-strangled-woman](http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/duncan-quinn-suit-ad-depicting-strangled-woman)>.

Kilbourne, Jean. "Chapter 2." *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the
Way We Think and Feel*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. Print.

Toni Ford, Advertisement. *Vibe*. 7 May 2012. Web, 23 May 2012.

<[http://www.vibe.com/photo-gallery/color-blind-7-other-controversial-ads
you-might-have-missed?page=8](http://www.vibe.com/photo-gallery/color-blind-7-other-controversial-ads-you-might-have-missed?page=8)>.

"UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of
Women." *UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women*. United Nations. Web. 22 May 2012.

<<http://www.unwomen.org/>>.

