

GENDER PROBLEMS IN MARKETING

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The publication is devoted to the issue of gender problems in marketing. The survey is concentrated on the problem of objectification in advertising in the tourism industry. The usage of erotica or pictures with a sexual subtext is the part of the agenda raised by feminism but nonetheless it is widely spread in advertisements throughout the world. The main aim of the survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of such advertisements in terms of raising customers' interest in a product.

Key words: objectification; gender problems; gender advertisement; tourism advertising; objectification in advertisements;

Objectification is the action of degrading someone to the status of a mere object. Although equality and getting rid of gender stereotypes are crucial points for modern society, advertisers still use pictures with erotica or sexual subtext to attract customers' attention and make advertisements more effective. With the development of the social networks and other Internet media advertising campaigns can reach millions of customers within a few hours or even minutes. So, equivocal advertisements can cause mass scandals and have a bad impact on a company's reputation. Even Belarusian companies suffered the consequences of their unsuccessful advertising. Nowadays companies need to answer the question whether the positive effect on the male audience outweighs the negative effect on other groups for example feminists. The data are taken from the tourism industry.

Sexual objectification is treating individuals as mere objects of sexual desires. The general poses and characteristics of the advertisements which are applicable to objectification are:

1. Women as the object of sexual pursuit;
2. Physical and psychological withdrawal of the woman;
3. Engaging gaze;
4. Body display [1].

Some tourism advertising which falls into these categories was chosen and divided into two groups: Belarusian and foreign. The first block includes examples of non-Belarusian advertisements of airlines and tourism agencies in English and Russian. (Fig.) The second block includes only Belarusian advertisements. But as tourism advertising is still developing, and will lack visual information, this block contains only Tez Tour advertisements. Also it's worth mentioning that this block actually includes nothing but body displays.

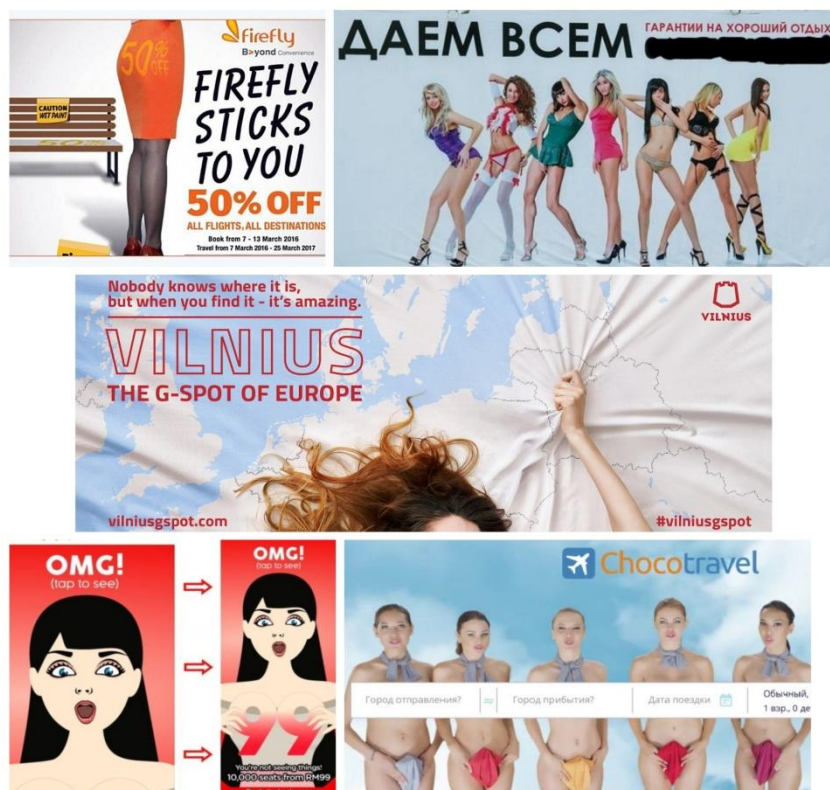


Fig. Advertisements of the first block

The questionnaire was launched to collect opinions from Poland, Belarus and Russia. Respondents were divided by age, gender and their attitude to feminism. More than 600 people were asked the following questions:

Are these advertisements offensive?

5. Are these advertisements unacceptable?

6. Have the advertisements affected your desire to buy goods?

The general information about the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Information about respondents

Age	<18	18-25	>25
Percentage	37%	59%	4%
Gender	Male	Female	Other
Percentage	28%	71%	1%
Country	Belarus	Russia	Poland
Percentage	67%	18%	15%
Attitude to feminism	Pro-Fem	Not feminists	Not familiar with ideas
Percentage	53.5%	38%	8.5%

The responses were divided by such key factors as gender and nationality in order to analyze whether the results differ in relatively similar countries and if gender socialization can have an impact on one's perspective on objectification.

The results after the division according to the nationality are presented in Table 2. The percentage in brackets indicates the amount of pro-feminist respondents among those who answered that way. The total sum of percentages may be under 100% as there were options «difficult to answer» (when asked about unacceptability and offence) and «no effect».

Table 2

Results according to nationality				
		Belarus	Poland	Russia
All		406	88	109
Pro-feminists		45,3%	52%	88%
1 block (Foreign)				
Offensive	no	33,5% (23,8%)	21,6% (11%)	15,6 % (10,5%)
	yes	50% (68,4%)	60,2% (70%)	75,2% (81,4%)
Unacceptable	no	23,6% (10,8%)	29,5% (26,2%)	11,9% (6,3%)
	yes	66,7% (82,1%)	52,3% (65,4%)	82,6% (87,6%)
Effect	positive	6,2% (1,5%)	8% (2,1%)	0
	negative	54,2% (74,4%)	62,5% (72,1%)	79,8% (73%)
2 block (Belarusian)				
Offensive	no	80,3% (71,7%)	76% (72,1%)	65,1% (61,5%)
	yes	4,9% (8,2%)	17% (21,9%)	14,7% (15,7%)
Unacceptable	no	73,6% (60,3%)	73,9% (67,7%)	51,4% (45,9%)
	yes	12,3% (20,1%)	14,8% (21,9%)	32,1% (35,5%)
Effect	positive	10,8% (4,9%)	21,6% (30,6%)	3,7% (2%)
	negative	13,5% (21,2%)	11,4% (11%)	25,7% (27,2%)

After comparing the results according to nationality of respondents, some consistent patterns can be clearly distinguished. As for the overall results, they are very specific. In Poland more people were offended by the advertisements, but fewer found that unacceptable. Also general opinion about the second block is negative in all the countries except Poland. In Poland ideas of feminism are widespread but people don't think something must be banned because freedom of speech is highly respected. In Russia the negative attitude towards such advertising is more critical than in other countries. A possible explanation is that Russian respondents were mainly pro-feminist. In Belarus the attitude is less negative, whereas the first block was found unacceptable

and offensive by the majority. The second is acceptable for more than 70% of respondents.

Table 3

Results according to gender

		Male	Female
All		167	430
Pro-feminists		28,7%	63,5%
1 block (Foreign)			
Offensive	no	59,3% (37,6%)	16,7% (8,8%)
	yes	25,7% (41,8%)	67,9% (82,4%)
Unacceptable	no	47,9% (37,6%)	12,3% (6,9%)
	yes	40% (52,3%)	78,1% (86,5%)
Effect	positive	16,2% (8,4%)	1,2% (0,2%)
	negative	31,7% (48,1%)	71,4% (81,7%)
2 block (Belarusian)			
Offensive	no	89,2% (85,7%)	72% (66%)
	yes	4,8% (6,3%)	9,8% (13,2%)
Unacceptable	no	85,6% (77,4%)	63,5% (53,5%)
	yes	9% (12,5%)	19% (27,1%)
Effect	positive	18% (16,7%)	19% (26,8%)
	negative	7,2% (10,5%)	6,5% (3%)

So, the general results show that women share almost the same opinion about the second block but the effect is dramatically different. The attitude towards the first block is opposite: females find it offensive and unacceptable, whereas the majority of males don't, but nevertheless the effect on both groups is negative. Also, it worth mentioning that these sorts of advertisements have a negative impact not only on women, but on men as well. So even if the advertisement targets only a male audience it may still have a bad influence on its target consumer.

But as the tourism industry isn't divided into categories by gender, there is no need to create advertising for men only that excludes or offends women. The overall negative effect shows that general efficiency of such advertisements isn't high and they rather push away potential customers - whether they are men or women – than attract them. These advertisements even may be regarded as a reason for media scandals and as a result a huge decrease in the number of potential customers and damaged reputation. So taking into account all the risk, companies need to think twice before using them while promoting their products.

Reference

1. *Chinar Mehta*, Objectification in advertising and Indian cinema: The culture of sexual violence [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: https://www.academia.edu/30052600/Objectification_in_advertising_and_Indian_cinema_The_culture_of_sexual_violence. Date of access: 05.03.2019.