

Advertising Styles In Embracing Marginal Segmentation: A Cultural Studies Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusivity, which blurs the idealized concept, is interpreted by brands as embracing marginalized segments of society to increase sales value and brand awareness. This realization emerges in advertising services that prominently feature marginalized segments, represented through actors and specific informational messages. The effectiveness of advertising with such a concept lies in its ability to address the issues faced by marginalized segments through a comprehensive understanding of advertising communication, behavior, and consumer segments. The objective of this article is to explore the advertiser's approach model in embracing marginalized segments, using a qualitative method to track and analyze relevant advertising releases, which are then examined through the lens of cultural studies. The results of this study demonstrate that advertisers adapt to market situations by considering various constructions of identity and the ideas that are currently present and will persist in society.

Keywords: Advertising, Marginal Segmentation, Cultural Studies

INTRODUCTION

Brands are now beginning to display new identities in their advertisements under the guise of embracing previously marginalized market segments. This new style represents a brand's adaptation to shifting paradigms and the evolving patterns of public perception. For example, the concepts of inclusivity and equality, which blur the distinctions between "ideal" and "non-ideal," demand that brands take a stance in order to align themselves with these newly exposed segments. Brands are now daring to create advertising designs that no longer embrace profiles considered "ideal" but instead embrace profiles that have not been deemed "ideal" or have been previously marginalized.

These facts indicate that the ideal advertising concept for the public is constantly evolving in line with developments in all fields, demanding that brands continually comprehend their commercial direction. Brands must align themselves to understand the dynamic consumer behavior patterns, ranging from identity profiles, cultural and social factors, psychological motivations, and personal aspects of consumers. (Hudani, 2020, p. 100)

Marketing communication and advertising, when executed correctly by a brand, will guide that brand in creating brand awareness and establishing a brand connection with its consumers. These components serve as information conveyors, reminders, and enticements to enable consumers to connect with the brand. (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 26) The proper implementation of advertising communication preparation will result in an inclusive understanding of consumer segments, ensuring that products or services can reach them and lead to sales.

In its implementation, a brand is required to have a comprehensive understanding of complex consumer behavior. (Kelley et al., 2022, p. 30) Consumer behavior explores the various factors influencing transaction decisions and their connection to the brand. Understanding these components means comprehending how to effectively implement marketing communication and advertising. Meanwhile, market segmentation also plays a significant role, serving as a component to optimize marketing strategy performance for greater effectiveness and efficiency. It is clear that segmentation is essential for brands to better understand consumer desires and needs. Brands can also identify and optimize the potential in each segment encountered, enabling the company to grow with a diverse array of segmentation variables it has acquired.

On the consumer side, when their needs or desires are addressed by the brand, it serves as a gateway to satisfaction. In this context, the presence of identity profiles that were previously marginalized and have now gained significant attention from the brand can lead to happiness and contentment among consumers with marginalized identities. This phenomenon is a result of self-representation that begins to be displayed by the brand, leading to the acknowledgment of their existence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Behavior

Advertisement released by a brand, according to Kotler & Keller, plays a role in influencing many factors that contribute to a consumer's "buying" decision. This, of course, is related to consumer behavior that a brand can interpret through in-depth research and analysis. (Kotler & Keller, 2009)

The **cultural aspect** is the first crucial asset that brands must holistically understand to capture their target market. This aspect relates to consumer behavior within the cultural and social context, which determines the ability to complete transactions. Cultural factors give rise to smaller sub-factors that also affect transaction intentions. Examples of these factors include nationalism, group dynamics, religious culture, and geographical factors.

Secondly, there is the **Social aspect**, which concerns consumer behavior influenced by the roles and social status they hold.(Shelviana et al., 2019, p. 45) This social dimension tends to be hierarchical and naturally formed, concerning the roles and status of individuals in society, which in turn influences transaction decisions. It's important to note that social class is not determined by a single barometer but is a combination of several variables. These variables include income, profession, education, wealth assets, and others. This aspect also explores the influence of reference groups in the vicinity, such as the significant influence of family in shaping attitudes and decisions.

Furthermore, the **Personal aspect** also has a significant influence on consumer decision-making. The Personal aspect encompasses factors such as age, personality, physical condition, principles, lifestyle, deeply held values, and desires driven by personal motivations.(Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 204) Lastly, there's the Psychological aspect, which also plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. It revolves around motivational drives, paradigm ownership, acquired insights, and beliefs. This falls into the category of psychogenic factors that orbit around more internal and private issues, such as the need for social acceptance and self-esteem.

In addition to the four aspects that play the most crucial role in a consumer's transaction decisions, Tonda & Tyas mention that there are several other factors that also come into consideration for consumers.(Tonda & Tyas, 2022, p. 515) These factors include (a) the brand image and perception of a brand, (b) the affordability of the price for individual consumers, (c) how the product quality aligns with the cost, and (d) the quality of service experienced by consumers during their transactions.

In this study, the researchers have observed that many brands have gained a thorough understanding of their consumers' behavior through their advertisements, especially concerning the personal aspects of consumers. Personal aspects such as personality, principles and values, lifestyle, and the need for recognition have been effectively leveraged by brands by presenting advertising offerings to these consumer segments.

Market Segmentation

Segmentation of the market also plays a crucial role in supporting the success of advertising communication preparation. The presence of a broad market (with its various derivations) requires a brand to establish more specific market segmentation. The market segmentation conducted by the brand can make the actualization of advertising more focused and specific.(Gea, 2022, p. 49) This also serves to transmit informational

messages about products or services that can address the needs and desires of consumers within that segment.

In general, several segments are commonly used as references in advertising manifestations, including (a) geographic, (b) demographic, (c) psychological, and (d) behavioral. **Geographic segmentation** results from the fragmentation of areas based on geographic or territorial boundaries. (Kelley et al., 2022, pp. 53–62) Through this segmentation, a brand can operate marketing and advertising based on specific regional or geographic boundaries, such as eastern, western, southern, or northern regions. The uniqueness of a geographic area can be highlighted through brand-released advertisements, representing the strengthening of a regional identity distinct from other territories.

Next is **Demographic segmentation**, which focuses on examining population-related variables in society, such as age and gender. (Gajanova et al., 2019, p. 71) Age speaks about the quantitative aspects that also have implications for the specific needs of each consumer. For example, the needs and interests of children will be significantly different from teenagers and adults. Advertisers targeting the children demographic place a strong emphasis on education, entertainment, and personality development. Marketers will implement different strategies when the age variable shifts to teenagers and adults, focusing on creativity, profession, aesthetics, maturity, social aspects, and freedom. Meanwhile, gender relates to the specific needs of two different profiles: males and females or both. Advertisers determine the target audience for a product, whether it's designed to address the needs of men, women, or a product that is gender-neutral and appeals universally.

Furthermore, **Psychological segmentation** is the division of the market based on psychological, emotional, and personality traits of consumers. Psychological segmentation involves several advanced variables, such as social classes, the lifestyle of individual consumers, and personality patterns. (Prince et al., 2020, p. 7) Social classes tend to form hierarchically in a vertical manner, with each class sharing similar values and behaviors. Designing advertisements to reach specific social classes should consider the interests and capabilities of each class. (Gajanova et al., 2019, p. 72) Then there are lifestyle and personality variables that can represent a consumer holistically. It's essential to note that lifestyle and personality are not only related to one's financial capabilities but also to inner satisfaction. Brands present advertisements with a touch of prestige and exclusivity, which can attract consumers with these characteristics to fulfill their inner satisfaction.

Finally, there is **Behavioral segmentation**, which is based on the behavior, attitudes, and responses of consumers to a product or service. The division in this segment revolves around factors like opportunities, utility, user status, and usage level. Advertisers can determine the approach that should be taken to reach each segment, which is a critical aspect of business allocation.

Advertising Communications

The central point in the realization of effective advertising communication revolves around the consumer. Embracing various consumer information also means understanding the navigation of advertising policies. (Kelley et al., 2022, p. 18) Advertising communication strategies serve an informative and persuasive function towards consumers, aiming to establish a connection, either directly or indirectly, regarding a product or service. At the very least, advertisements should stimulate consumers to reinforce their needs and desires for the product or service being offered to them.

Djayakusumah in Lukitaningsih explain that there are 6 indicators that influence the brand advertising opportunities for consumers. (Lukitaningsih, 2013, pp. 34–35) (1) Attention, the brand's ability to capture attention, (2) Interest, generating interest in consumers, (3) Desire, creating an intention for consumers to like and possess, (4) Conviction, instilling confidence in consumers regarding the brand or product/service, (5) Decision, influencing consumers' decisions to make a transaction, and (6) Action, leading to concrete steps in conducting a transaction.

Effective advertising is inseparable from presenting an idea, capturing attention, eliciting consumer responses, and providing significant competitive value in brand competition. (Kelley et al., 2022, p. 31) Delving into various aspects related to advertising effectiveness, such as product, pricing, consumers, and brand competition, can help assess potential issues and identify solutions to address them. (Farahdiba, 2020, p. 7) In this context, for instance, a problem may arise when trying to reach specific segments that were previously marginalized because they never received attention from the brand. Brands should be able to offer a significant idea to underscore the importance of the segment they want to embrace. This idea can then be effectively developed through appropriate design and media for its launch to the public.

The presentation of ideas from a brand through advertisements can encompass three fundamental characteristic concepts, aiming to gain the optimal appeal from consumers (ad viewers). (Lukitaningsih, 2013, p. 36) **First**, "Meaningful," which can be interpreted as the diffusion of benefits that make consumers like or be interested in the advertisement offering a product or service. **Second**, "Distinctive," which defines the exclusivity value inherent in the advertised product or service, explaining its uniqueness compared to competitors. **Third**, "Believable" is the factor of consumer trust in the advertisement, which is expected to align with the reality they will experience.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher will apply a literature review as the methodological basis for this study. Sources will be obtained from exclusive scientific journals that focus on the topic at hand, such as communication and advertising, consumer segmentation, and reviews

from the cultural studies perspective. The aim of this article is to unveil the approach models used by advertisers offering their products/services to "marginalized" segments, as viewed through the lens of cultural studies.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Advertisement Representations of Marginal Segmentation

Brands attempting to embrace marginalized segments aim to draw attention and create an impression of their presence when reaching out to these segments. Researchers can examine several advertisements that truly reflect the intensive advertising concept towards marginalized segments. The marginalized segments defined in this article are fragments of society that are elusive or have never received any attention on the surface, especially in advertising media. They tend to feel alienated because they deviate from the "ideal" construct of identity created in society.

In this context, the researcher will review advertisements that represent brands in demonstrating their attention to marginalized segments, specifically in advertising (a) Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop";(COMMERCIAL BREAK INDONESIA • IKLAN TV INDONESIA, 2022a) and (b) Rexona Men Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop".(COMMERCIAL BREAK INDONESIA • IKLAN TV INDONESIA, 2022b)

First, on advertising Rexona Motion Activated "72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop" with a duration of 30 seconds, the ad features three actresses performing aerobics in an outdoor park setting. The three actresses in the ad consist of a woman dressed in blue (left), pink (middle), and bright green (right), with the woman in pink receiving more prominent focus in the ad. It's apparent that the ad intends to project a strong image of the woman in pink, as indicated by the greater camera focus on her. This is further emphasized in the following scene where the dominant actress is shown using Rexona's deodorant product in an indoor setting.

The question is, why does this advertisement allocate dominant focus to the actress in pink? The researcher sees an intention by the brand to manifest their affinity for a segment of female consumers who have excess weight or are overweight, which is represented by the actress in pink in the ad. This divergence is quite apparent when compared to ads that often tend to showcase actresses with a "ideal" physical appearance according to the majority of societal perspectives, which typically involves a slim body.

Second, it is presented in advertisements Rexona Men Motion Activated “72 Jam Kesegaran Nonstop” A 30-second advertisement is set on an open badminton court, explicitly highlighting the dominant actor with physical limitations (disabilities) as the main focus of the ad. The intensity of the disabled actor in the ad is indeed the central theme, and they are shown using Rexona's deodorant product in the subsequent scene. The researcher's analysis is that the predominant focus on the disabled actor is indeed a brand strategy to embrace marginalized segments such as people with disabilities, as portrayed by the main actor in the advertisement.

Both of the above ads feature the faces of marginalized segments in society with the label "non-ideal," with each profile of a woman who does not have a slim figure and a man with physical disabilities. This reality reflects the brand's serious efforts to embrace this particular market segment that has received less attention from other brands.(Selensky & Carels, 2021, p. 95) This representation seeks to provide affirmation for the existence of marginalized market segments that have not received more attention from brands through their advertisements.

Cultural Studies Perspective on Advertising

The existence of advertising within the discourse of its influence on culture in society is relatively fresh but has already brought about significant change. This stems from the assumption that advertising has sparked a shift in cultural life, promoting a consumer culture.(Hackley & Hackley, 2021, pp. 11 & 13) Furthermore, advertisements are seen as manipulators that can lead to misconceptions and deceive consumers when they receive them. This manipulation is caused by excessive and unrealistic hyperbolic content, which is a cause for concern. It is through these various provocations that many individuals spend their resources on products or services that do not provide a significant benefit in return.

Many advertisements portray a commercial aspect, often creating sensational yet valueless ads that challenge ethical conceptions in society.(Hackley & Hackley, 2021, p. 12) However, it cannot be denied that advertisements also provide access to the manifestation of expressing freedom, unhindered exchange of ideas, and encourage a progressive social culture.

Hackley refers to this type of advertising as "social advertising," considering social issues, ongoing cases, and promoting a change in action or perception regarding a topic. According to him, the agitation of social advertising is now more dominant than conventional branding advertising, where brands are not only transmitting identity profiles for profit, but also supporting social change.(Hackley & Hackley, 2021, pp. 12–13) Advertising is one of the dynamic cultural products that is not always fully oriented towards commercial interests (partial). With this interest in mind, symbolic transmission becomes

a suitable medium for connecting consumers with the brand, both in terms of ideological and material attachment.

The existence of cultural studies in this article serves as a platform for the expression, meaning, and symbols presented by advertisements. According to Storey, it involves marginalized and subordinate groups in their resistance against those who are consistently dominant in the mainstream.(Storey, 1996, pp. 3–4) Advertisements are associated as products vying for the stage of ideology and the existence of their target consumers, as evidenced by the lack of segmentation standards in each ad, which is constantly changing.

Cultural studies can observe this phenomenon through various aspects, such as pragmatic, institutional, or, for example, the encoding-decoding process of communication according to Hall.(Hall, 2006) These various aspects certainly consider the influence of values, beliefs, habits, and behaviors of the audience. As previously discussed in the review, this cannot be separated from the various components in advertising strategies as an effort to enhance the connection between consumers and the brand. If a brand pays attention to the values and principles, habits, and the reality of its consumer behavior, this also represents the practice of the ongoing culture.(Barker, 2002, p. 4)

Marginal Segmentation within the Framework of Cultural Studies

The "marginal segmentation" referred to by the researcher in this article is a product of the construction of identity profiles that continue to undergo dynamic shifts over time.(Barker, 2004, pp. 93–94) The identities presented in various advertisements are natural and not fixed representations but an ongoing process. The cracks in identity and the dynamics of cultural patterns in the advertising scene are continuously adapted by brands in their advertisements, always adjusting to their era, absorbing various aspirations, and real development contexts.

As highlighted in the previous advertisements, the identities of segments connoted as "ideal" with characteristics (such as beauty and an ideal body) continue to change toward other definitions of "beauty" and the "ideal body." In this discussion, "beauty" is no longer confined to the definition of fair skin alone but can include other segments, for example, women with exotic dark skin. Similarly, the concept of the "ideal body," which used to be consistently associated with a slim physique, is now not always the case.(de Lenne et al., 2021, pp. 4–10) This phenomenon serves as a clear illustration of the shifting identity profiles that have become cultural norms in society, or in other words, it represents the dynamics that brands attempt to adapt to in their advertisements.

Advertisements that aim to create attention among potential consumers will naturally be packaged with specific design and messages. Marginal segments that were previously elusive and untouched by brands are now being embraced with an affirmation of their existence.(Selensky & Carels, 2021, p. 100) For example, the Rexona brand's

advertisement above proves that segments of women or men with disabilities, who are considered not to have an "ideal" physical appearance, can also be part of the Rexona brand. They are embraced with a strong focus in the advertisement, which is expected to generate interest and trust from consumers, leading to the decision to purchase.

Mention, for example, if the Rexona brand wants to reach a demographic segment with characteristics such as teenagers to adults, who tend to be highly active and have a psychological need for recognition of their experiences. Then, it's the advertisements that represent their existence that can attract this segment to enjoy (read: buy) the Rexona brand. As Mulgrew stated, how body image is portrayed in the media significantly influences the satisfaction of consumers who see it. (Mulgrew et al., 2020, p. 128) Suffice to say that the Rexona brand clearly aims to address the concerns of this segment that were previously not "acknowledged" because they had never appeared on the surface.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Absolutely, the optimization of sales value and consumer brand awareness can be achieved by embracing segments that were previously unseen in the media through advertising. Advertisements have undergone concrete reforms in both the commercialization and idealization of messages, no longer marginalizing emerging ideas and concepts in the public sphere. To create consumer appeal, advertisements are packaged with a formula for transmitting messages and unique identity figures that represent marginal segments. This is a manifestation of interpreting identities that blur the culture and concept of the "ideal" in society with a new face. Such responses are the result of reading the dynamic market situation, behaviors, and various variables of each segment in society.

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