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J314: Merskin

Culture Jam: Apple’s iPad Air

Original Advertisement:



Culture Jam:



In the culture jam we created, there are many images used to convey the intended message about Apple’s iPad Air. The title and caption used for the jam was taken directly from the iPad Air advertisement. We chose to place this in our culture jam mainly because of the phrase “The power of lightness” which holds several meanings linked to the beneficial aspects of the tablet as well as its detrimental effects to the media ecosystem. When this slogan is placed in context next to the image of the iPad Air, it is obvious that Apple is referring to the lightweight, portable and sleek features of their new device. However, when there is an image of two starving children in Africa used to communicate “the power of lightness” the issue has now changed from a hegemonic ideology to one of counter-hegemonic value.

According to James Lull, “hegemony is more than the sum of differences in social power, it is a method for gaining and maintaining power” (Lull, 48). Apple holds a large amount of control and social power by producing products that are aesthetically pleasing, simple, and contain closed software. In our culture jam, we decided to depict the concept of power by placing the image of the African children below the young blonde girl using the iPad Air. The African children are reaching up as if they are grabbing the iPad as if it were an object needed to survive. With the continuous production of Apple devices, consumers feel as though they are obligated to purchase the newest and most efficient model. Our counter-hegemonic representation is an attempt to critique the hegemonic power of Apple within a capitalist society.

The material items in society have developed a greater importance, and have influenced the way people see themselves in the world. Antonio Gramsci, an early twentieth-century Italian intellectual, decided to expand the Marxist term for hegemony in economics to fulfill the values of ideology. The use of manipulation by authoritarian leaders during the fascist movement was an extremely effective way of bringing people together and believing the same ideas. Lull explains,

“In Gramsci’s time and continuing today, owners and managers of media industries are able to produce and reproduce ideological content, inflections, and tones far more easily than other people in society because the elites manage the key socializing institutions, thereby guaranteeing that their points of view are constantly and attractively cast into the public arena” (Lull, 49).

When electronic media was first established, fascists used propaganda to influence the actions of a community. Today, entrepreneurs use advertisements to accomplish similar tasks and benefit their side of the campaign (Lull, 50). Throughout time, images in mass media have always sent a powerful message to people and consumers. With Apple’s use of simple images it makes people want to know more and be affiliated with this modern, sophisticated design.

Prior to the critiquing of Apple’s iPad Air advertisement, we noticed several fundamental elements that are usually included in the process of developing a successful message. Apple’s recurring use of black and white are attention grabbing because these colors are basic and uncomplicated. Generally, Apple will picture the product they are trying to sell and then have a catchy saying to go along with it that will quickly persuade the buyer that the newest version of that product is better than anything else on the market. In the iPad Air advertisement we chose to analyze, Apple showed a simple picture of the super thin iPad Air and then used an enticing slogan to grab the consumer’s attention.

While examining the influence of media devices in society and their impact on specific environments, it is important to reflect on the target audience of the product and who will be directly and indirectly affected by the creation. Most advertisements directly aim to persuade the viewer that what is being discussed will improve or enhance their life. As explained in Lull’s text about media’s impact on audiences, “…Joseph Klapper concluded that the mass media generally do more to reinforce pre-existing human behavior than to change it” (Lull, 100). While the iPad Air is a new device that is substantially thinner and lighter than the previous iPads, it is very similar to the existing tablets and is not a necessary item to own. However, Apple and other corporations have seen the impact mass media has on advertising products and by targeting individuals at a specific time and place can greatly influence their decision making.

Apple has released five generations of iPads since 2010, with each model changing slightly for the quality of the buyer. The general audience of the Apple iPad is broad because of the many purposes it holds as a media device. Students, businessmen, grandparents, and even doctors have used the iPad. The purpose of Apple’s advertisements is to show that the iPad is easy to use, reliable, and portable. In Matt Asay’s article, “Apple Doesn’t Target Markets. It Targets People” he states, “It targets people. It focuses on users. And Apple lets them decide how and where they’ll use its products” (Asay). By directing the message toward individuals and communities, people get so wrapped up in the technological world and the newest software rather than focusing on other aspects of life that may be more important.

The target of our campaign for Apple is to take a closer look at their products, specifically the iPad Air, and bring attention to the environmental and societal effects it has on consumers. Our idea was to use simple images and powerful photographs to explore the serious message behind the materialistic culture seen in the United States and other more developed countries. Just like Apple, our advertisement was meant to target any individual who may be interested in purchasing an iPad. We used children because comparing a child in the United States with a child in Africa are two very different cultures and it definitely affects the viewers’ emotions.

The proposed message of the culture jam created was to show that Apple is a very successful company, but there are many hidden elements of the brand that are concealed behind the Apple logo. Organizations, such as Greenpeace, have been working for almost a decade to create a “greener” Apple. As specified in the article “Green my Apple bears fruit,” Greenpeace explains, “In late 2006, it became clear that the company which had been least responsive and falling further and further back in the rankings was, surprisingly, Apple.” Since Apple is so great at targeting the customers through their advertisements, Greenpeace felt the only way to accomplish their goal was to stand in the place of the consumers and educate the audience on the issue.

The importance of our culture jam was to make people think about what is important, and how can we change what is happening in the media industry to benefit everyone. It is clear that we want to expose the reality behind Apple’s iPad Air by showing the comparison between needs and wants. By placing the iPad Air in a category as an object of desire rather than expectation consumers can reflect on their values and purpose. This culture jam is extraordinarily strong because the images open the audience’s mind to real life factors and how fortunate individuals take certain items for granted every day. We believe our culture jam contains a clear and important message, but after seeing other Apple advertisements we could have made it more similar to the one we got the idea from. Overall, we are satisfied with the jam created because it expresses

Works Cited

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