

Project Definition

My project is presenting a critical point of view against the enforcement of the popular culture and the visuals surrounding us. I think advertising playing a central role in creating consumer culture and it is a considerable part of the system that makes our lives monotonous and creates a society that only consumes and does not think. My aim is to fight against negative effects of advertising by subverting the world presented in them. Encouraging people to regain control of culture and to ask “Why do I need to possess these objects”.

Objectives & Goals

Project’s goal is to point out thing that makes us vulnerable to messages around us and create awareness about visual signs by emphasising those messages.

According to research I got from article, Consumption and the Consumer Society, by Neva Goodwin, Julie A. Nelson, Frank Ackerman and Thomas Weiskopf, psychological theories of motivation can shed light on why people come to desire certain things.

One frequently used categorisation breaks down human perceived needs into five categories:

1. Physiological needs, such as hunger and thirst.
2. Safety needs, for security and protection.
3. Social needs, for a sense of belonging and love.
4. Esteem needs, for self-esteem, recognition, and status.
5. Self-actualisation needs, for self-development and realisation.

Advertising appeals to many different values, to emotional as well as practical needs, to a range of desires and fantasies. The multitude of advertisements that we encounter all carry their own separate messages, but on a deeper level, they all share a common message, **they are selling the joys of buying, promoting the idea that purchasing things is, in itself, a pleasurable activity.** In my examples I will emphasise these values that promote consuming in the advertisements and cut through the glamorous and mediated reality and show the deeper truth within.

Target audience/user

Target audiences are adults that are working, making money and not aware of the messages in advertisements that are creating pressure on us to consume more. Sabancı University can be the area to carry out the project. All students and people working here are my target audiences to criticise popular culture and consumerism.

Background information

When I first started to think about the project I was in Rome for exchange program. When I came back, I thought that the life was much more calm and stress free in Rome. As I was far away from my friends and family for a few months, we were trying to arrange a meeting to see each other but everyone was so busy and we could not get together for a long time. Most of them were working or applying for master programs and they were too busy. I observed that people are becoming less happy and I could say that they are turning to robots. It is like there is contest and no one wants to stay behind. It may be said that there is a fear but what leads that? Why are we so anxious, what we really want to achieve in life? That made me think that this is the system, we are part of the consumer society and it works great in our country. I think we should take a breath and think what we really want and we should seek our real passions, create some little time, to get to know ourselves.

A French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist says that modern consumer society's problem is the capitalism that seeks to unleash the desire to spend. It advocates hedonism. People want to possess more goods because today material goods are not only objects of consumption but they are objects of need and satisfaction. He says that we are dominating by signs and images of consumptions, even our schools are subverted by consumerism and we are getting more and more far away from reality. Today consumerism has a new form that it dominates our political life and our way of communication through these signs. Baudrillard says that, "advertising and marketing become the signs and language and entire communicative structure within our society, which come to dominate all other forms of discourse and signification." It is nearly impossible not to be affected from this signs and Turkey is also increasingly oriented around consumption.

I want to focus on this language that advertising and marketing uses. How can signs affect the society and dominate us? Art critic and author John Berger, in his book *Ways of Seeing*, claims that oil painting tradition of western societies is continuing in images in our century, both use the same language. Oil paintings were celebrating private possessions, publicity has taken its place and makes us want to possess. Women are depicted as an object that is available for man, as an object to be possessed. Now, models have taken the place of this ideal subjects. We are surrounded by images of an alternative way of life, a glamorous, dream world. But we can say that the world that is depicted in traditional European oil paintings was real, paintings were showing facts about real lives. In contrast, publicities are emphasising our personal envies and they are trying to create an anxiety about money. That glamorous world created in the publicities tries to tell you 'You are what you have! Get more! Money changes your life'. Publicities both promises of a dream and threatens. The more we have fear of not being desirable or unenviable, the more we aspire to achieve things that are shown in publicities. There is an imaginary future to be achieved and this is becoming more and more influential if our lives are monotonous and passive. Monotony creates structure and offers us security but it is also prevent us from being ourselves and removing our freedom.

So this is the consequence of the capital system. Working people should envy, consuming people shown in publicities. Berger says that capitalism aims to limit demands of people by imposing what to like, to aspire and what is right or wrong. Democracy is leaving his place to consuming. Deciding about what to eat or what to dress is becoming much more important than political decisions. The fear of not to be able to possess leads people to consume more. Ruby Lilaowala says that, "We smother our secret fears of impermanence by surrounding ourselves with more and more goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, only to find ourselves their slaves. Our only aim in life soon becomes to keep everything as safe and secure as possible." So maybe we should be more aware about the signs that are trying to lead us.

Detailed project description

Advertisements pressure us by creating a desire to live in an unapproachable world and manipulating our values that are impotent for us. Generally appeals to our extrinsic values: conformity, to fit in with other people, image, to look attractive in terms of body and clothing, financial success, to be wealthy, achievements, personal success and power, status and control over other people. I will focus on advertisements that are reflecting those basic insisting of ads. I will search for the messages " Save less, barrow more, work harder, consume greater!"

These examples can be both outdoor advertisements, print-ads or a sequence of a commercial. I will print them in a poster size and they will be my facades to use projection mapping. I will redesign a visual according to the ad I have choose and point out the message with in the ad, by exaggerating it or showing it directly to the audience. This visual will be a video to project on the poster that I printed. My aim is to subvert the message in the ad, to make viewers realise they have no been paying attention to values in the ads. I will use motion graphics to make video mapping.

Difficulties & risks

I need information and sociological research,
- about consumerism, popular culture and urban life.
- about effects of visuals around to society.

It may be difficult to make visuals attractive and unusual to make audience think and ask questions.

Phases of the project

-Research about consumerism, popular culture and values that are easy to manipulate, to make us work more, buy more, become monotonous and die, effects of visuals around to society .

- Finding examples
- Choosing the ones I will use
- Creating attractive visuals

Criteria of success

Attracting people attention and make them think about the negative effects of advertising. Encouraging people to regain control of culture and to ask “Why do I need to possess these objects?” take them away from the mechanical and repetitive life by increasing their awareness.

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