

L'oreal: Is This Really an Ad for Men?

Olivia Smidel, Amy Stel, Sarah Sprout, Randi Groff, and John Dicks

COME 324 - FA19

Dr. Kim Smith

12/9/19

L'oreal: Is This Really an Ad for Men?

Introduction

Persuasion is a technique commonly used throughout advertisements and in the media. However, some persuasive attempts fall short and the original message is lost; this may even spark controversy. An example of a persuasion attempt gone wrong is an advertisement created by L'Oreal, a well-known cosmetics company. Due to the lack of and misuse of persuasive techniques, the intended message of this particular L'oreal advertisement is conveyed incorrectly and sparked anger in some viewers. This paper will illustrate the steps that were taken to improve the original advertisement and make the message more appealing for the intended audience. By using techniques such as logos, recency, and conclusion drawing, the new L'oreal advertisement can appeal to more people by providing a clearer message. In the original ad by L'oreal, the message conveys that men have the power to give more leadership roles to women; however, this resulted in an offensive message that was unable to reach the target audience. L'Oreal also fails to use inclusive language in order to include all of their audience in the original ad. Our goal in recreating this advertisement is to redirect the original message so that it is less offensive and create one that is more inclusive; the new message is about empowering everyone to feel more confident.

Description of Original Persuasive Artifact

When looking at the original artifact, it sparks a fairly strange feeling. The first thing in the ad that stands out to the audience is the title that states "This is an ad for men." Knowing that it is an advertisement for cosmetics, it may be assumed that it is meant to appeal to women due

to women being the primary consumer in the past; therefore, using the punchline “This is an ad for men,” makes this ad very confusing to the audience. This confusion creates a big downfall for this ad. Meaning that the ad is missing its target audience, who they intended to be men. Women will see the ad, see the title, and then move on from it. While men, who by chance may see the ad, will see the mascara brush and that it is an ad from L’Oreal, and move on from it because it isn’t something that they are interested in. The title, “This is an ad for men”, is the main attention grabbing feature of the ad and it is very likely that it fails to grab the intended audience’s attention.

Under the title of the ad, there is a sentence that reads, “Hire more women in leadership roles. We’re all worth it.” This sentence, though it is intended to be encouraging to women, can be seen as demeaning and unneeded. Although a large makeup company like L’Oreal is standing up for the noticeable employment gap between men and women and the gender bias in the workplace, it insinuates that ultimately men have control over the success of women. The title reading, “This is an ad for men” makes it seem that men have the power to give women leadership roles. This can also seem very demeaning and give the wrong message to the women who view this ad. The text is also in very small font, making it hard for the reader to even read what it says. In addition, the sentence is not inclusive of other audience members and pits females and males against each other. By revolving around the binary gender roles, the artifact leaves out those who do not identify as a man or woman. These identities also may use L’Oreal makeup, thus making them feel excluded from this campaign. It is important for L’Oreal to include those who have different gender identities because a large part of the LGBTQ+

community utilizes makeup to express themselves in many different ways. This could cause L'Oreal to lose customers who belong to any identity, binary or not.

Moving further into the ad, there is a very large image of a mascara wand with mascara streaks that are meant to represent a line graph. This is included in order to relay the main statistic of the ad. The main message of the statistic is that employee satisfaction is said to rise 24% with the addition of mentoring for female leaders according to the leadership review. This statistic is not effective because it is very confusing. Instead of utilizing a straightforward statistic that relays the original message of workplace equality, the ad provides a statistic for mentoring for female leaders. Not only this, but the statistic of only 24% doesn't provide a convincing argument. It shows that there is only a minor change in workplace satisfaction, not a major one. L'Oreal could have used another statistic that provided a very clear argument with a convincing percentage that can persuade the audience to believe it. This only adds to the confusion of L'Oreal's message.

Overall, this ad has good intentions but conveys it in a very confusing message. From top to bottom, the message is clouded. The whole concept of a cosmetic ad being for men is an overall appeal to the audience of women who will be the main group of people viewing this ad. The statistic used to convey the original message of the ad is inconsistent and does not persuade the audience to act according to their argument. Though L'Oreal is intending to stand up for women in the workplace and use their platform to encourage equality, this ad is not a good or effective way to obtain this goal and may anger many customers.

Analysis of Artifact

The original advertisement created by L'Oreal attempts to bring awareness to workplace inequality experienced by women at the hands of men. In order to address this problem, the artifact suggests that women are capable of holding leadership roles and that men have the power to place them in these positions. L'Oreal uses a magazine print advertisement to depict the simple, but two-sided message; this message argues that women are worth hiring and are equally or more successful than their male competitors. The intended audience of the artifact is men, which is clearly illustrated by the header which states, "This is an ad for men". This simple and obvious theme is continued throughout the advertisement which focuses on peripheral cues in order to appeal to the ideology that women are oppressed in the workplace. The advertisement attempts to change the attitudes of those who do not view inequality in the workplace as a valid problem and enforces the attitudes of those who feel strongly about equal rights in the workplace and sexism.

In addition, L'Oreal utilizes ethos and logos in order to further persuade its target audience. Ethos, which is an appeal to credibility and character, is indirectly used in the artifact. Due to L'Oreal being well-known in the cosmetics industry and having a large customer base, the company is seen as a reliable source which results in their message as also being seen as credible. Therefore, their message utilizes an appeal to ethos in hopes of persuading the target audience to believe their message based on the company's reputation. Furthermore, the artifact makes use of an appeal to logos or an appeal to logic in order to create a stronger persuasive message. This appeal is used in the advertisement by incorporating statistics. A mascara brush is streaked across the page and the statistics are included alongside this image; the statistics state

that female leaders had a 24% higher mentoring score and is used in order to support their claim and persuade men to hire more women. However, the artifact fails to use an appeal to pathos. Although the ad may spark strong emotions in some viewers, this was not intended by the marketers and was the result of a lost message. The initial message may have had good intentions but was seen as offensive to some women and to other minorities who are left out of this conversation. Therefore, the emotions that the advertisement caused were unintentional and not the result of an appeal to pathos. Overall, the ad makes good use of ethos and logos but falls short due to its misuse and lack of an appeal to pathos.

Moreover, L'Oreal uses additional persuasive techniques in order to create a resonating message for their intended audience. The artifact's simple message results in the absence of a narrative. Instead of telling a story, the ad focuses on confronting the social issue in a simple way that includes a picture of mascara and a punchline. As a result, the audience is able to interpret this ad in their own way because there is not much information included. The only conclusion drawn for viewers is that men have the power to put women in leadership roles and that women often are very successful. In addition, by including the large header that says "This is an ad for men", L'Oreal is able to capture the attention of "men" as well as other viewers due to the messages uniqueness. Moreover, when first looking at this advertisement, a person could be filled with confusion about what it is intending to say. A person may look at it and think, "is this company trying to get men to buy makeup?" The punchline also creates a primacy effect which is the tendency of a viewer to remember the first piece of information encountered and aids in the message resonating with the audience, even if it is in a bad way. The artifact also uses the recency effect by including L'Oreal's logo and product at the end of the advertisement. Because

the brand name and mascara will be the last thing seen by viewers, they will be more likely to remember the company and associate them with this issue.

Although the original artifact is successful in using some persuasive attempts, it falls short in reaching the intended audience and creating a favorable message. Even though L'Oreal intends to empower women, this message seems to do the opposite. Ironically, the artifact gives all the power to men by stating that they have the power to put women in leadership roles instead of encouraging women. Also, the message is unable to reach the intended audience because it is a cosmetics advertisement featured in a magazine, but is meant to be seen by men; men are less likely to be reading a magazine that this advertisement would be featured in. Due to these faults, the message is not distributed successfully and can benefit from changes.

Modified Persuasive Artifact

The new artifact utilizes many of the same persuasive tactics that the previous ad did, but in a different way and more efficiently. The target audience originally being men did not make sense knowing that the majority of men do not use makeup or read magazines written for women. In addition, it allows women to claim their worth specifically for a job based on how they present themselves, especially based on what makeup they are wearing. The primary message of the new artifact is one about inclusivity, empowerment and confidence; in contrast to the original, our message is one-sided. We chose to utilize ethos, logos, conclusion drawing, and peripheral cues and leave out a narrative similar to the original artifact. However, we chose to change the way pathos was used and appealed to different ideologies and attitudes than the

original. When designing the new artifact, our goal was to create an inclusive message that was more appealing to viewers and targeted a larger and more logical audience.

The new advertisement takes advantage of appeals to ethos, pathos and logos in a similar but different way than the original. An appeal to logos is included in the artifact by showcasing statistics in order to appeal to consumers. The statistics used states, “You are 60% more likely to get the job if you display confidence” (“8 Surprising Statistics about Interviews,” 2018). This statistic was chosen to get the audience thinking about confidence and how the product can also give them a boost of it. The goal of using a statistic about confidence was to encourage a more inclusive message about success in the workplace. An appeal to ethos is featured by inserting the brand name, L’oreal, at the bottom of the ad. In doing so, this creates a recency effect that will enable readers to associate the brand with the message. In addition, this is a popular brand that has made a name for themselves and people see them as reliable, which results in the message as also being seen as reliable. The use of recency in correspondence with the the brand name makes it so the brand name is the last thing lingering in consumers minds. The use of pathos was not intentionally used in the original artifact; however, this was one of the main focuses of the new message. The improved advertisement utilizes the punchline, “This is an ad for the empowered,” in order to showcase a sense of inclusivity and spark feelings of confidence in the viewer. The intention is that this appeal to pathos will cause consumers to feel good about the product and might even empower them to purchase it. By utilizing these three appeals, the artifact aims to encourage viewers to feel more confident and persuade them to buy L’Oreal products.

Similarly, this ad still takes a peripheral route and draws specific conclusions for the audience without the use of a narrative. The majority of the ad is made up with peripheral cues seeing as it is not making anyone think long or hard about buying makeup, but rather just appealing to the sense of self and empowering people to be more confident; makeup being a tool to build that confidence. With the use of peripheral tactics, the artifact is meant to be low-involvement so that consumers are likely to keep the product in mind, but not thinking too much about it. That is another reason that there isn't a lot of text included in the artifact, so that it is easy enough for people to get the idea of the ad and not pass by it thinking it would take up too much of their time to read it. In doing so, they can quickly be reminded that they are enough simply by being themselves and that finding confidence is important to success. Also, by using peripheral cues and minimal information, much is left to interpretation. For example, the use of a fist is intended to symbolize empowerment but could be interpreted in different ways. Although the ad draws the conclusion that confidence leads to success, much is left for the viewer to interpret for themselves which allows people to connect to the ad in their own way.

Furthermore, the new advertisement appeals to a different ideology and attempts to change different attitudes than the original. The original artifact appeals to the ideology that women are oppressed in the workplace, whereas the new advertisement focuses on the idea of inclusivity. As societal trends change, inclusivity is becoming a very important topic. Everyone holds different views about this subject but it can be agreed upon that everyone has the right to feel confident and empowered. Through the improved ad, the goal is to alter the attitudes of

those who do not feel empowered and reinforce the attitudes of those who feel confident in themselves.

Instead of using the idea that men need to hire more women in leadership roles, the new artifact encourages everyone to feel confident and take on any role. So, rather than making the target audience men, who the product is not intended for but still can totally use, the new ad is targeting anyone who could use more confidence and empowerment. This is where the original ad missed their target, it never was specifically intended for men to see, instead it made women viewers feel less than and as if their lives are controlled by the men who hire them. The new message utilizes similar techniques but is more inclusive and can apply to anyone without insulting or offending anyone in the process.

Conclusion

Overall, the main goal of recreating the original L'oreal advertisement was to change the meaning to make the advertisement more appealing and inclusive. The old advertisement was targeted at men, which confused who the message was really intended for. The main changes of this ad revolved around the heading, which is now targeted towards everyone, not just men. The other major change to this advertisement was changing the sub-heading that stated, "Hire more women in leadership roles". Instead, the new advertisement states to take on any role, and appeals to a broader group of people. The last element that was changed in the ad was the statistic, which was changed from a man's perspective of leadership roles to the importance of confidence. The message of the new advertisement is based around empowering everyone and urging them to take on any role. Instead of the old advertisement that separated men and women,

this new ad includes everyone and encourages them to show confidence. The other main message this new ad conveys is equal opportunity and women's rights in the workplace. The old ad insulted women's ability to get a job, but the new ad encourages that everyone deserves equality in the workplace.

Reference Page

Glenday, J. (2019, April 8). 'This is for Men' - L'Oreal Paris unveils clever ads calling for more women in leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/04/08/l-oreal-paris-turns-the-tables-men-wi-th-female-empowerment-campaign>.

8 Surprising Statistics about Interviews. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.twinemployment.com/blog/8-surprising-statistics-about-interviews>.