

Stephanie Faudoa

Professor Glantz

Principles Mass Communication

December 1, 2020

Seventeen Magazine

Throughout the years mass communication has taken the world by surprise from its innovative aspects to the way that it allows people to have a sense of expression. Magazines opened up a world of possibilities when they began to circulate after the Civil War years which was known as their modern age era. Today, magazines are a form of literature as well as an appeal to specific audiences. *Seventeen Magazine* has been a major attraction to young adults and continues to grow in its population from its topics in fashion, makeup, relationships and much more. When it comes to the advances of *Seventeen Magazine* throughout the years in mass communication many individuals can see the evolving changes that have taken this magazine through different stages over time as technology has continued to progress our media culture.

The first issue of *Seventeen* was published in September of 1944 and the woman who was the founder and editor of this magazine was Helen Valentine. Valentine was born and raised in Manhattan and graduated from Barnard College in New York. She specified that the reason that this was a valuable magazine was because it sent out the message that, "It was time to treat children as adults"(Ennis, T). Ultimately, she wanted *Seventeen* to be important to all young women and for them to be able to relate or seek help through the pages of this magazine. After Helen Valentine's death at the age of ninety-three, Hearst Corporation purchased *Seventeen Magazine* for \$180 million in 2003. Hearst Corporation is a conglomeration of many other companies for example, BuzzFeed, BAZAAR, ESPN, LifeTime, and many more creating a chain

of well known companies. A conglomeration can be defined as, “the increase in the ownership of media outlets by larger, nonmedia companies”(Baran, S. J.). When it comes to large corporations it is important to have conglomerates in order to make a greater profit and attract a variety of consumers to their products.

Seventeen brings an appeal of teen fashion, life, and the needs of girls at a young age with its variety of topics that are demonstrated throughout the magazine. For instance, how to get a boyfriend, clothing that is in season, makeup, sex and appearance. All of these topics have an impact on the teen audience that reads this specific magazine. According to Baran, “Ninety percent of American adults consume magazines either in print or digital form, a proportion that grows to 95% when considering only people younger than 25. They read on average 8.6 print magazines a month, and the heaviest readers tend to be younger”(Baran, S. J.). Teenagers or to be more specific teenage girls have a major impact on *Seventeen* since this magazine is mainly focused on their perspective and interests. When it comes to mainstream culture many people are more influenced by what is considered to be a “real” woman or teenager and don’t like the idea of being influenced by photoshop or by these contouring images that don’t demonstrate the real beauty of women. This is why *Seventeen* took a new direction when they made the decision to take a no photoshop pledge for their magazine. The person who influenced this decision was a 14 year old girl named Julia Bluhm when she noticed that there were many girls her age who were complaining about their looks due to the unrealistic ideals that many magazines portrayed through photoshop. In her interview she stated, “If you're looking for a girlfriend who looks like the models that you see in magazines, you're never going to find a girlfriend, because those people are edited with computers”(Hu, E.). Julia who is in eighth grade noticed the corruption that photoshop brings into a teenage girl's viewpoint and how it makes girls all around the world

feel unworthy due to them not reaching the expectations of what a magazine considers as the definition of “beautiful”. With the advancements of technology it truly has made it much easier for companies to create an ideal standard of beauty that society feels the need to uphold in their own personal lives even if it is completely unrealistic. “Skilled operators truly are like magicians, except they use tools like Photoshop...to create their illusions”(Baran, S. J.). Photoshop is just a brain game that plays with the audience reading the magazine and making them wish that they looked a certain way in order to be considered worthy in society. *Seventeen* is giving power to real and true beauty by putting an end to photoshop being used in their magazine. Ann Shoket, *Seventeen*'s editor and chief mentioned in the article, “The entire *Seventeen* staff has signed an eight-point Body Peace Treaty, promising not to alter natural shapes and include only images of "real girls and models who are healthy" (Hu, E.). For the consumers of this product it is vital that they are being heard and understood by *Seventeen* which not only makes their magazine more authentic to the buyer, but also gives them more of a reason to continue purchasing this quality product.

In order to generate a profit *Seventeen* sells their paper magazines in a variety of locations including bookstores or general shopping stores in which they are placed in a specific area in order to catch a consumer's attention. *Seventeen* is considered a consumer magazine which according to Baran is defined as, “Magazines sold by subscription and at newsstands, bookstores, and other retail outlets, including supermarkets, garden shops, and computer stores" (Baran, S. J.). Its popularity involves the fact that they have many famous well known actors or artists portrayed in the front and center of their magazine some include Cole Sprouse, Sabrina Carpenter, Maddie Ziegler, Cameron Dallas, and many more. Although, in today's modern society there are many individuals who are taking more of an online platform when buying their

magazines due to technological advancements and how technology is now at the palm of their hand. This has made *Seventeen* rely more on a new technological basis in order to continue gaining popularity. In 2019 they made the choice to start implementing more online articles declaring themselves as a digital-first magazine. *Seventeen* stated, “Our teams are embracing cross-platform brand alignment, which will foster even greater idea sharing, more ambitious content creation and the development of strategic business initiatives” (Barber, K). Paper copies are no longer having the impact that they used to have in the past and this is why *Seventeen* is adjusting to becoming online magazines. This is a type of platform that is more efficiently available to their clients while also gaining more popularity.

Advertising is a major platform in magazines and it still continues to be. There is a lot of product placement in magazines in order to get teenagers to purchase a specific brand of deodorant that smells fresher, lip gloss that lasts 24 hours, or even different acne creams that have been proven to work efficiently. Baran states, “Many critics say that much advertising is inherently deceptive in that it implicitly and sometimes explicitly promises to improve people’s lives through the consumption or purchase of a sponsor’s products” (Baran, S. J.). This can be very true when it comes to advertising, but it is also important to realize that without advertisement the world people know of today would not exist since society depends on this factor in order to survive.

Seventeen is of socio-political importance because it advocates to teenagers the significance of voting in presidential elections as well as informing them of the importance of using their power to vote in our democracy. The influence that this magazine has to advocate to teenagers about information that they may not be informed of at home is truly incredible and it provides these individuals with the knowledge that they are important in our democracy.

Seventeen makes it known that their vote has a significant meaning to the future of the United States.

Seventeen is evolving through time and so are its trends as it is creating changes through mass communications. As technology continues to advance, so will the form of receiving information in order to make it more efficient for customers. The way *Seventeen* has portrayed itself to teenagers is of major significance, because it has taught girls that true beauty isn't shown through an edited image, it is shown through much more including the personality and uniqueness of each and every individual. Media is a part of society and there is no way of avoiding it, but what is truly vital is that each and every person takes on the positive aspects of these forms of media in order to create resilience throughout society.

Works Cited

- Baran, S. J. (2019). *Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Barber, K. (2018, November 20). Seventeen Magazine Eliminating Frequency After 74 Years in Print - Folio:.. Retrieved November 19, 2020, from <https://www.foliomag.com/seventeen-print-cut-special-issues/>
- Ennis, T. (1986, November 15). FOUNDED SEVENTEEN, EDITOR OF MAGAZINES. Retrieved November 19, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/15/obituaries/helen-valentine-93-founded-seventeen-editor-of-magazines.html>
- Hu, E. (2012, July 06). 'Seventeen' Magazine Takes No-Photoshop Pledge After 8th-Grader's Campaign. Retrieved November 19, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2012/07/05/156342683/seventeen-magazine-takes-no-photoshop-pledge-after-8th-graders-campaign>