
BACHELOR THESIS

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**Provocative advertising strategies
in the fashion industry**

**Opportunities and risks of
provocative advertising strategies
based on American Apparel**

Hamburg, 08.07.2014

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of provocative marketing strategies of different companies in the fashion industry in the first part. The thesis emphasizes on various strategies used by several firms. Furthermore it demonstrates the different modes of provocation and also the process of a marketing strategy. The second part highlights the opportunities and risks of provocative marketing strategies based on American Apparel.

Contents

Contents	V
List of abbreviations	VII
List of figures	VIII
1 Introduction	1
2 Meaning of shock advertising	2
3 Types of Provocation	3
3.1 Religious provocation	3
3.2 Political provocation	7
3.3 Social provocation	8
3.4 Advertising provocation - Sex Sells	11
4 Different arts of shock advertisement	15
5 Provocation in the fashion industry	20
5.1 Purpose of provocative adverts	20
5.2 Brands that provoke	21
5.2.1 Benetton	21
5.2.2 Dolce and Gabbana	23
5.2.3 Tom Ford	24
5.2.4 Calvin Klein	25
5.2.5 Desigual	27
5.2.6 Agent Provocateur	27
5.2.7 Diesel	28
5.2.8 Abercrombie& Fitch	29
6 Main issues in the fashion industry	31
6.1 Children in fashion	31
6.2 Anorexia	35
7 About American Apparel	39
7.1 The Company American Apparel Inc.	39
7.2 Advertising strategy of American Apparel	41
7.2.1 Advertising overview	42
7.2.2 Background	55
8 Opportunities and Risks of American Apparels provocation	56
8.1 Risks of American Apparels' provocation.	56

8.2 Opportunities of American Apparels' provocation.....	57
9 Result and Summary	58
References.....	XI
Appendix.....	XVIII
Declaration of Authorship.....	XXI

List of abbreviations

Advert – advertisement

Aka. – Also known as

ASA – Advertising Standards Authority

Cf. – confer

Etc. – et cetera

NOW Foundation – National Organization for Women

WFP – World Food Program

List of figures

Figure 1 The face of Muhammad by Kurt Westergaard in 2005	4
Figure 2 Madonna in 2006 at her Confessions Tour in Rome	5
Figure 3 NPD election poster 2009.....	7
Figure 4 NPD election poster 2009.....	8
Figure 5 Jbs Advertisement	13
Figure 6 Anti Smoking Campaign 2011 in Australia	17
Figure 7 MOMS DEMAND ACTION Campaign in 2013	18
Figure 8 Benetton's 'Unhate' Campaign in 2011	19
Figure 9 A preliminary model of consumer reactions to shock appeals (Dahl et al., 2003).....	20
Figure 10 Dolce&Gabbana Ad in 2007- banned	23
Figure 11 Tom Ford Campaign in 2008	24
Figure 12 Tom Ford fragrance campaign	25
Figure 13 Diesel 'Be Stupid' Campaign	29
Figure 14 London Kids Fashion Week.....	32
Figure 15 Thylane Blondeau in Vogue Paris issue from Dec. 2010	33
Figure 16 Thylane Blondeau for Jalouse, April 2014	34
Figure 17 Nolita anti-anorexia Campaign in 2010.....	35
Figure 18 Ralph Lauren Campaign in 2009 ft. Filippa Hamilton	36
Figure 19 Star Model Advert in 2013 "You are not a sketch".....	37
Figure 20 American Apparel Ad in 2003- Cotton you can feel how good it looks	42
Figure 21 American Apparel Ad in 2004- Meet Sophie	43
Figure 22 American Apparel Ad in 2005- Viva México City!	44
Figure 23 American Apparel Ad in 2006- Now Open.....	45
Figure 24 American Apparel Ad in 2007- Sweter than candy. Better than cake.....	46
Figure 25 American Apparel Ad in 2008- Self Portrait.....	47
Figure 26 American Apparel Ad in 2009- Flexfleece	48
Figure 27 American Apparel ad in 2010	49
Figure 28 American Apparel Ad in 2011	50
Figure 29 American Apparel Ad in 2012- Hello. Meet Steffi	51
Figure 30 American Apparel Ad in 2013- Meet Trudy.....	52
Figure 31 American Apparel Ad in April 2014- Made in Bangladesh.....	53
Figure 32 New York located American Apparel store in 2014	54

1 Introduction

Advertising is the most common, and arguably the most effective strategy of accomplishing enlargement in consumers' interest in a particular product, brand or event. Advertisement is the key to represent a companies name or brand to the consumer. An advertisement may provide essential information to the user and may assist in the decision making process.

"What the business is worth advertising on the German market, only shows the dynamics of the advertising investment, in 1987 and 2006 increased by around 77 percent to € 30 billion, wiping itself over the past twenty years." (Nickel, 2014)

To leave an effective impression, agencies and marketing departments of the companies need an adequate presentation of the advertisement, which penetrates the viewer's mind.

The purpose of shock advertising is to leave an impact on the viewer. This kind of advertising can be perceived negative as well as positive; this therefore is up to the consumers' attitude. And yet the aim of shock advertising is not to promote a product or to change the consumers' attitude.

If a brand needs to be distinguished from the rest it can be beneficial to apply shock advertising, as it would be effective in most cases, if used deliberately.

"Sexual references that violate norms of morality are consistently used by the clothing company F.C.U.K. "all night long" and F.C.U.K. "think my clothes off" (Andersson and Pettersson, 2004)

"Accordingly, the objective of shock advertising is to achieving a shock, to break taboos, to violate norms to charge the brand essence of a company with polarizing attributes." (Böres, 2011)

This work will provide a detailed insight into the provocative and shocking fashion world. On the basis of examples of different companies and their advertising scenario campaign, the awareness of how the companies are using provocative sexual stimuli, such as American Apparel market its brand and catches the attention. Finally this work discusses the opportunities and risks of the Company at the end.

2 Meaning of shock advertising

Shock advertising, according to Gustafson and Yssel (1994) *“is generally regarded as one that deliberately, rather than inadvertently, startles and offends its audience.”* (Gustafson, Yssel, 1994)

“Dahl et.al (2002) suggests that shock advertising, by definition, is unexpected and audiences are surprised by the messages because they do not conform to social norms or their expectations. They argue that audiences are offended because there is ‘norm violation, encompassing transgressions of law or custom (e.g. profanity, vulgarity, or things that outrage the moral or physical senses’, for example gratuitous violence and disgusting images (p.268).” (Fill, 2005)

3 Types of Provocation

Provocation, in case of advertising, refers to an act, which attempts to irritate the viewers in a displeasing way. It aims at creating a line of thought in the viewers' mind. Provocations are made deliberately and the offending party may face harsh consequences.

Provocation can occur in different ways and may be triggered by anyone whose objective is to notice the reaction of a certain person or group.

Especially those who have been into major media influence, such as actors, singers, athletes, politicians and journalists know how to use their power in the media.

Provocation may flow from those who upset worshippers of a certain religion by making an assertion, which can be misunderstood or perceived offending, by artists who use their popularity to send out messages to their fans and the society, but also by politicians who use provocation for a statement, which they make to represent their party. Lastly, the probably most well-known type of provocation is "Sex Sells" which mostly finds its usage in advertising in the fashion industry.

The mentioned types of provocation are listed below with up to four examples to provide a more precise perception.

3.1 Religious provocation

The Muhammad caricatures

Good examples for this type of provocation are the 12 published cartoon caricatures in 2005 by Kurt Westergaard. First appeared in the Danish daily newspaper Jyllands-Posten under the name of „The face of Muhammad“ the cartoon showed the prophet Muhammad with a lit bomb as his turban. A month later the same caricature along with the 12 others was published in the Egyptian newspaper. The drawings spread rapidly worldwide, the Muslim community felt offended and insulted at the same time. (cf. Knecht, 2011)



Figure 1 The face of Muhammad by Kurt Westergaard in 2005¹

After the drawings were published and caught the attention of the Muslim community in February 2006 the designer of the caricatures, Kurt Westergaard, received several death threats.

The extents of riots of the publication were enormous, plenty burning embassies and over 150 people died during violent demonstrations. Muslims all over the world vowed revenge for the critics of their sacrosanctity prophet. According to the Islamic perception it is not allowed to draw pictures of Muhammad, as well as to criticize the Islam. Multiple times the Jyllands-Posten received death threats and the originators were tried to be assassinated. (cf. Knecht, 2011)

¹ <http://koptisch.wordpress.com/2011/12/12/das-komplott-um-die-mohammed-karikaturen/> (Viewed on 27.06.2014)

Madonna- Confessions Tour

Another provocative Religious act was Madonna's Confessions Tour in 2006, where she was raised on a cross wearing a crown of thorns which reminded the audience of Jesus Christ. The show in Rome at the Olympic Stadium in front of almost 70.000² spectators sparked violent protests from the Catholic Church. Although many people were offended by that show, some of her fans had a different viewpoint on that act. (cf. BBC News, 2006)

One Roman Madonna fan, the 39-year-old Tonia Valerio, told the Reuters news agency the crucifixion was "unnecessary and provocative," but added that the singer is also "an icon, and that balances out her need to provoke". (BBC News, 2006)



Figure 2 Madonna in 2006 at her Confessions Tour in Rome³

Madonna, also known as the Queen of Pop, has been called one of the „25 most powerful women of the past century“ by Time magazine.

² <http://www.rp-online.de/kultur/musik/madonna-begeistert-roemer-mit-kreuz-und-krone-aid-1.474754> (viewed on 30.05.2014)

³ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1077602/Police-probe-offensive-photo-Madonna-art-gallery-window.html> (viewed on 30.05.2014)

Madonna is a musician in the first part, but also known for being a provocateur, an activist, an actress and an author. With the release in 1984 of her second album "Like a Virgin" she showcased in front of the world that she has the ability to turn controversy into publicity. The release of this album with Madonna on the cover with a white-lace-clad in a virgin/whore pose and a Boy Toy belt turned the singer into a superstar. More than 10 million copies were sold and spanned five Top 10 singles. But other than that, the visual and lyrical content it was, that set successful pattern, which Madonna has followed through her career; (cf. DeMarco, 2013)

"Intentionally provoking with a mix of overly sexual content, religious symbolism and devil-may-care girl-power rebellion". (DeMarco, 2013)

Perhaps nowhere was Madonna more provocative and sexualized than on her 1989 album "Like a prayer," which was laden with catholic imagery, including bleeding stigmata and burning crosses for the video of the same name.

Though the song and album hit No. 1, it inspired strong protest by Catholic and other religious groups. (cf. DeMarco, 2013)

Madonna used the occasion to speak out against what she felt was an oppressive Catholic upbringing. (cf. DeMarco, 2013)

Different modes of provocation can be used to offend a religion. Not only a world famous artist such as Madonna but also an individual who portrays his thoughts in cartoons can offend a specific religion. In most cases the provocateurs have to face critics, hate and demonstrations from the particular offended religious group.

3.2 Political provocation

A political party in Germany called the “NPD”, which stands for *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland*, has often been criticized by the media, the reason being mostly their negative approach towards foreigners. It represents a nationalist and revanchist ideology. According to many political scientists and historians, it has a programmatic and linguistic proximity to the NSDAP “*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*”. Based on their profile, the Party is closely monitored by the constitution protection. (cf. motor-talk, 2013)

In 2009, during the time of the federal election in Germany, the NPD promoted their party by publicizing placates offending the foreigners in Germany, especially the Muslim Community by using Muslim names and sayings in a rhyme like

“Ist der Ali kriminell, ab in die Heimat aber schnell.” (NPD, 2009)

Which means, “If Ali is a criminal, send him back to his homeland”



Figure 3 NPD election poster 2009⁴

⁴ http://www.npd-lahn-dill.de/index.php/menue/24/thema/69/id/1942/anzeigemonat/01/akat/1/anzeigejahr/2011/infotext/Kommunawahl_2011_NPD_plant_ueberfremdungskritischen_Wahlkampf_in_Frankfurt/Archiv.html (viewed on 04.07.2014)

Another example is the following placate with the words, “Have a good flight back home”, and showing a “Muslim family” on a flying carpet, also used in 2009.



Figure 4 NPD election poster 2009⁵

Often provocation is criticized in politics, as a distinct group of people feels attacked. Nevertheless, Germany is a democratic country where everyone has the right to speech.

3.3 Social provocation

Lady Gaga

Lady Gaga, born Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, on March 28 1986 in Manhattan, New York is an American songwriter, singer, actress, philanthropist, dancer and fashion designer. During her rising career in 2009, Gaga came under increased public and critical scrutiny for her eccentric and often bizarre style choices. (cf. Bradbury, 2013)

⁵ <http://augsburg.1st-amendment.info/?p=2065> (viewed on 01.06.2014)

In 2010, Lady Gaga appeared on her Show in Prague wearing a see-through nun outfit of plastic, only her nipples covered with crossed nipple-stickers. (cf. Martinez, 2010)

„(On Donatella Versace) She is an iconic and powerful, yet people throw darts at her. She is definitely provocative.“ – Lady Gaga (IMBD, 2014)

In the time of her shows Lady Gaga often gives empowering speeches to her fans about the relevance of the inner-strength and being whoever you want to be. (cf. Bradbury, 2013)

She says about herself that she was the flaunting girl, the “theatric chick”. She did not wear the same clothes as the other girls would have worn; she always had a different style and also came from a different social class than the others. At the age of 11 Gaga attended the Convent of the Sacred Heart where she was bullied for her appearance. She was small and pudgy had large front teeth and bizarre habits. (cf. Bradbury, 2013) Not only the way she dresses Lady Gaga drags attention, but also with the lyrics of her music and the music videos. She can and knows how to shock the society and religious supporter.

In 2011 when she released her song “Judas”, the Catholic community felt insulted and upset, as she shows her love to the Jesus-traitor Judas, by playing the role of Maria Magdalena in her Music Video. (Dailymail, 2011)

Miley Cyrus

Miley Cyrus, born Destiny Hope Cyrus on November 23, 1992 in Franklin, Tennessee, made her debut with the Disney series *Hanna Montana* in 2006. In the show *Hanna Montana* in which she performs a teen leading a double life as a pop star, was so successful that she hit records and sell-out tours as well as merchandising deals, which followed soon. (cf. IMDB, 2014)

In 2008 Miley was illustrated scantily dressed on the Cover of the fashion and lifestyle Magazine *Vanity Fair*. As she is a role model for millions of teens in the US and around the world Miley had to apologize for the appearance on the cover, yet she was famous than ever. (cf. IMDB, 2014)

In 2009, for the Teen Choice Award the 16 years old Miley appeared in a top, too tight hot pants and boots singing and dancing on a stripper pole. And this, at a show, that is designed for teenagers and children. cf. *Starpulse*, 2009)

Since Miley Cyrus, as a role model, sends messages out to her young fans, many parents around the world were shocked by her performance that night.

In 2010 Miley Cyrus announced the end of her hit series *Hanna Montana* and rapidly changed her style and image. (cf. IMDB, 2014)

There are many ways to provoke the Society, mostly these are achieved by famous people, stars from the Television and the Music industries as they are most of the time in the media and many people especially teenagers and children look up to them. (cf. *Starpulse*, 2009)

According to the mentioned two examples the Film and Music industry does have a big impact on the provocation of the society as they are and will mostly be a big part in the media. Teenagers and Children often see stars and celebrities as their role models, since they are what most of the teenage kids want to become: rich and famous. Stars and Celebrities use provocation not only for attention but also to use it as a “free promotion” for their singles and movies. As the media will surely talk about the deeds and action the stars and celebrities do it is, as mentioned above, kind of an indirect advertisement for them.

But not only celebrities but also companies can make feel the society confused and embarrassed.

American Apparel

“American Apparel for example stirred a bit of genuinely interesting controversy with a t-shirt collaboration with the artist Petra Collins in 2014. The shirt featured a line drawing of a woman’s menstruating vagina, which made some people feel very confused and uncomfortable. The artist shot back at the critics with the opinion that our culture is entirely accepting images of extreme violence and “readable” representations of women’s sexualized bodies, but balks at an innocuous drawing of a vulva.” (cf. McDonough, 2014)

“We are so shocked and offended by something, which is such a natural state — and it’s funny that out of all the images everywhere, all of the sexually violent images, or disgustingly derogatory images, this is something that’s so, so shocking apparently. The graphic on my shirt is a line drawing, too. It’s not even a full-on image.” (Collins, 2014)

3.4 Advertising provocation - Sex Sells

The motto “sex sells” has validity in advertising like never before. Especially during the summer time, advertisers attract the publicity with lots of bare skin. Many campaigns during the time are very bold even almost pornographic. However this only applies to Europe as the population in the United States regards too much of bare skin in advertising critically. Often it is the woman who is the target of advertisement such as for men underwear, shampoo, deodorant or perfume. Often because women do the main shopping in the household, furthermore because whenever there is a good looking men in underwear, for example, Cristiano Ronaldo for Calvin Klein’s underwear or David Beckham for H&M, they want their partner to look just as good in it. But furthermore because the importance of women as consumers is growing, according to the study of the book “Zielgruppe Frau: Wie Sie die anspruchsvollsten Konsumenten der Welt erreichen”, the authors Silverstein and Sayre are presenting the findings of a large-scale study by the Boston Consulting Group. It delivers results to the choice of a career, income, relationships, shopping habits, fears and desires of women. In which 12,000 women were interviewed in 22 countries. They earn a high amount of money and are globally responsible for the main part of consumer spending. The fact that the company must not squander this opportunity is obvious. If they tune their products and services to the target group women, there is great revenue potential. (cf. Silverstein and Sayre, 2009)

Old spice- the man, your man could smell like

Old Spice was not well known before they showed an advert at the Superbowl in 2010.

“This crazy-yet-crisp introduction to one of the most popular viral ad campaigns in history, which aired for the first time during last year’s Super Bowl (2011) showdown between the Indianapolis Colts and the New Orleans Saints, sparked an Internet phenomenon, reaching more people than Procter & Gamble (Old Spice’s parent company) could have possibly fathomed.” (Smith, 2011)

Former football player, actor and model Isaiah Mustafa is widely known as *“the man your man could smell like”* (Old Spice, 2010)⁶ from the old spice advert.

In the advert the viewer is confronted with a good looking and well trained man first topless wearing a towel in the bathroom. He is especially talking to the female viewer by saying a few times “look at him, now back to me...” holding old spice into the camera by pointing out that “sadly he isn’t me” all at once he is on a yacht holding old spice in his hand, again topless this time he holds an oyster with two tickets “to that thing you love” which again turns into diamonds. And suddenly, as “everything is possible if you smell like old spice” the diamonds turn into the old spice bottle and he is on a horse. (cf. Old Spice, 2010)

Axe- Virtual fondle

In 2010 Axe came up with a campaign where a soldier flies with outstretched arms to his destination. But what he sees remains hidden for the viewer of this advertising poster. The viewer can only watch a yard long, splayed legs and a butt sticking in tight military shorts. According to AXE it does not take more for a successful advertising campaign.

The upper body and the young woman’s face were simply cut off. This “man’s dream on High Heels” was “probably the hottest butt of the nation”, praises Axe in a press release on its poster campaign. The fact that the woman on the poster is not much more than just a butt seems irrelevant. (cf. Friedmann, 2010)

⁶ <http://www.oldspice.com/en-US/videos/video/22/the-man-your-man-could-smell-like/?page=2> (viewed on 26.06.2014)

Jbs Underwear

Also, products for men are mostly being advertised by sexy dressed yet half naked women. Not only Axe but also the underwear company from Denmark jbs promotes its underwear for example by illustrating a woman in a sexy charwomen dress smelling and feeling the underwear. It shows how sexy and amazing the underwear is and that by wearing the underwear one man becomes attractive to the women. Other than the advert where a male is shown, in this adverts where woman are scantily dressed, the male audience is the target, since most of the male consumers want to attract as many women as possible.



Figure 5 Jbs Advertisement⁷

These three companies, which use the motto “sex sells” as a main part for their advertisement, show how effective nudity and sexiness actually is. The old spice advert is almost branded in the consumers mind. And almost everyone knows what “happens” if one uses the Axe deodorant from the television advert.

⁷ <http://s617.photobucket.com/user/nryy/media/mens-jbs-underwear-french-maid.jpg.html> (viewed on 20.06.2014)

Rihanna

The famous photographer Mario Sorrenti has recently directed Rihanna: as meat male fantasy. So sharp, that when she posted a photo from the shoot, her Instagram account @badgalriri – after all, among the top five most followed in the world went offline, unclear whether locked by the operators or disabled by her after several warnings.

According to the changing sources of influence in fashion, Tom Ford said, *“Something new is happening that I’m just clueing into now—this probably won’t go down well—but customers don’t care any more about reviews or hard-copy publications. They care what picture Rihanna just Instagrammed while she’s naked in bed, what new shoes she has on, how she’s talking about them. That’s what they respond to.”* (Ford, 2014)

And Alexander Wang says, *“There is no one who inspires me more, this is raw, that’s smart, that is all that pop culture needs to evolve.”* (Wang, 2014)

But it is also true that the French "Glamour" stated recently: *The Vulgar is the new chic. Long the porn aesthetic has arrived in the middle of society, the ordinary brats all have triumphed over their mothers. Miley licks on each photo something different, Kim Kardashian wearing on her wedding a dress with a neckline to the navel, and no one rules the game with the trash like Rihanna. This is because swagger, sexual staging and asked displays of wealth are not typical behaviors of R n’ B and Hip-Hop. But because they are, however, just always one-step ahead, stylish and musically.* (Dillig, 07/2014)

4 Different arts of shock advertisement

'Shockvertising'⁸

There are four categories of shockvertising:

- **Porno chic:** this concept was born in France, uses sex in advertisement, provocative, but still represented discreet, through the product of the brand (cf. Douma, 2010)
- **Trouble:** The brand wants to disturb its audience by illustrating violence, drugs, death, etc. The aim is to make the viewer feel uncomfortable (cf. Douma, 2010)
- **Confusion:** The objective behind this category is that the audience should ask itself and think about, what the relation to brand or product is, since in most cases there is no relation between the message (image) and the product being promoted (cf. Douma, 2010)
- **Black humor:** Often black humor is used to help the brand stand out from the rest. When the message is particularly funny (often television spots) this will be posted to sites such as YouTube and can be forwarded to friends. This is also known as creating a buzz, hence buzz marketing. (Douma, 2010)

Why Shockvertising?

An adult in the U.S. absorbs approximately 2500 to 3500 advertising messages a day from which he only remembers a few. (cf. Trajer, 2002)

Shockvertising gives a brand the opportunity to make people aware of a product or a company.

As soon as advertising exceeds certain ethical boundaries many people react with a shocking behavior and this is exactly what advertisers are exploiting.

⁸ "A concatenation of the words shock and advertising as a type of marketing communication. The idea behind this concept is to increase the attention and retention (memory) and to create a reaction by the target audience." (Douma, 2010)

The higher the shock factor is, the stronger is the impression, so if the topic is being discussed, is also the message, which the campaign should mediate, on everyone's lips. Also, the high level of creativity carries to their success, which is developed for this kind of advertisement.

Shockvertisement works with different provocation; some of them are disgust, sexuality, religious taboos, vile languages and their norm violation. (cf. Mohr, 2012)

Lischka distinguishes seven types of subtypes

1. *"The first one demonstrates disgusting pictures, which for example show blood, diseases, injuries, and death. This could be pictures from real life or staged images."* (Lischka, 2006)

One example for disgusting campaigns is the in 2011 published cigarette packages in Australia. Different disgusting pictures on each package visualize the drawbacks of smoking, what it causes and how one may look like once affected. One picture shows a child lying in hospital bed with different instruments that has been passively smoking because of its environment. Another picture compares a non-smoker lung and a smoker lung. Further, another picture portraits a man suffering from lung cancer.



Figure 6 Anti Smoking Campaign 2011 in Australia⁹

2. *“The second subtype refers to the figures of sexual actions, images with sex appeal or even photographs with provocative poses. This type of figures can appeal derogative to most of the women.”* (Lischka, 2006)
3. *“The third one tries to shock its audience by showing vulgarities, by abusive language or offending gestures.”* (Lischka, 2006)
4. *“The fourth category represents references to vulgarism, such as tacky and socially undesirable behavior of people or animals.”* (Lischka, 2006)
Beneath this are motives, which for example illustrate people with sexual actions with animals.
5. *“The fifth subtype plays with inappropriateness and violation of social conventions.”* (Lischka, 2006)
6. *“The sixth subtype is being described as morally offending. This could include violence against innocent people or animal, unfair behavior or involving kids in provocative sexual or violent situations.”* (Lischka, 2006)

⁹ <http://connectu.it/blog/view/26528/sigarette-arrivano-i-pacchetti-shock> (viewed on 20.06.2014)

The picture below is a campaign of collective mothers calling for gun law reform, it has launched a print and television advertising campaign focused on children in school.

One child is holding something that has been banned in America to protect them. Guess which one? (Moms Demand action, 2013)



Figure 7 MOMS DEMAND ACTION Campaign in 2013¹⁰

US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have banned the “Kinder Chocolate Egg” because they believe that the small toy hidden inside could be hazardous. (cf. Macleod, 2013)

7. “The last case refers to the representation of religious taboos and rituals”, (Lischka, 2006) such as the pope kissing the imam in the Benetton campaign UNHATE.

¹⁰ <http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2013/moms-demand-action-on-gun-laws/> (viewed on 19.06.2014)



Figure 8 Benetton's 'Unhate' Campaign in 2011¹¹

Benetton had to withdraw this advertisement campaign image of the pope kissing the Egyptian imam, Ahmed Mohamed el-Tayeb, after the Vatican complained it is disrespectful.

The campaign's adverts include digitally altered pictures of half a dozen world leaders, which shows them kissing.

Shockvertising has long been a part of Benetton's marketing strategy, with photographer Oliviero Toscani's famous campaigns featuring death row inmates and people dying of AIDS. (cf. Dailymail, 2011)

¹¹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2062423/Benetton-Unhate-advert-Pope-kissing-imam-withdrawn-Vatican-calls-disrespectful.html> (viewed on 26.06.2014)

5 Provocation in the fashion industry

“Provocation is good! Boring clothes do not interest me - I like avant-garde fashion, that causes reactions:” Nicola Formichetti¹²

In this Chapter the purpose of provocative advertisement will be discussed shortly, followed by brands in the fashion industry that are known for provoking its audience.

5.1 Purpose of provocative adverts

„The main reason for using shock advertising strategy is that it is a good way to secure an audience’s attention and achieve a longer-lasting impact than through traditional messages and attention-getting devices. The surprise element of these advertisements secures attention, which is followed by an attempt to work out why an individual has been surprised. This usually takes the form of cognitive engagement and message elaboration in order that the message is understood. Through this process a shocking message can be retained and behavior influenced.“ (Fill, 2005)

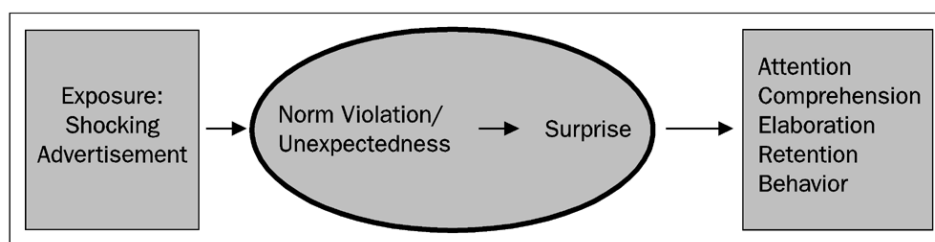


Figure 9 A preliminary model of consumer reactions to shock appeals (Dahl et al., 2003)¹³

According to Christian Khalil (expert for communication) experienced speakers use provocation as a stylistic device only very metered and well considered.

¹² <http://www.zeit.de/news/2012-05/29/mode-lady-gagas-designer-provokation-ist-gut-29124202> (viewed on 29.06.2014)

„Nicola Formichetti is a british Creative Direktor, Fashion Director and a Fashion Stylist, mostly known for his work with Lady Gaga“ <http://models.com/people/nicola-formichetti> (viewed on 01.07.14)

¹³ Dahl, D. D., Frankenberger, K. D. & Manchanda, R. V. (2003). Does It Pay to Shock? Reactions to Shocking and Nonshocking Advertising Content among University Students. Journal of Advertising Research. Sep2003, Vol. 43, Issue 3

Otherwise there is the danger that they will overstate the goal and the audience feels too offended or that the speaker is attributed content ambiguous position due to the provocation. Not to forget that too much use of provocation can destroy the wanted effect. (cf. Khalil,)

5.2 Brands that provoke

Provocation in the fashion industry is a daily topic, and sometimes it seems like the companies are competing on who provokes the most. The fashion industry is a tough business. The competition within this industry is strong and regardless, no consideration for young upcoming designers. As it gets harder for young designers they need to stand out and build up a reputation in an unforgettable way.

Adam Selman for example is one of them; he created a dress for Rihanna for the Fashion Awards on June 2nd, 2014. The 'naughty outfit' she wore was comprised of a total of 216,000 Swarovski crystals, left nothing to the viewer's imagination. She wore just a nude colored thong under her see-through dress, but no bra, and her breasts were clearly visible.

On Twitter, Facebook and online Magazines – everyone was talking about her appearance at the CFDA. (cf. Fahy, 2014)

Since everyone was talking about the dress the 26-year-old singer wore, not only Rihanna but also the designer, who created the dress, achieved his yearned objectives. (cf. Fahy, 2014)

5.2.1 Benetton

Benetton was famous for its colorful and provocative advertisements. The company employed unusual, controversial advertising techniques and themes that used "shock value" and the power of photography to grab the viewer's attention. Unlike most advertisements, which center on a company's product or image, Benetton's advertising campaigns focused on social and political issues like racial integration, AIDS awareness, war, poverty, child labor, death, pollution and many more. The advertisements initially succeeded in raising the brand's profile, but eventually began to cause dissatisfaction

among customers, retailers, government bodies and various international non-profit organizations. (cf., Ganesan and Thota, 2003)

Some of Benetton's most memorable shockvertisements were a priest and a nun kissing, a newborn baby with uncut umbilical cord, a black stallion and a white mare mating, a colorful mix of condoms, a black woman breast-feeding a white baby, the photo of an AIDS victim and his family taken moments before his death and the bloody uniform of a dead Bosnian soldier. ((cf., Ganesan and Thota, 2003)

Until the 1980's, Benetton advertisements had largely focused on its products and logo. In 1982, Luciano Benetton hired Oliviero Toscani, a prominent fashion and advertisements photographer to head Benetton's advertising department. Toscani's initial advertisements were conventional. They showed groups of young people wearing Benetton clothing. But Luciano and Toscani soon realized that Benetton advertisements had to stand apart from the rest of the competition. They decided to promote Benetton as a life style brand. (cf., Ganesan and Thota, 2003)

Toscani explained his role in Benetton:

"Nobody ever told me my job was to sell anything. I'm responsible for the company's communications; I'm not responsible for its economics. Mr. Benetton has given me incredible freedom to propose issues that should be communicated. To be really contemporary, an up-to-date company, we must take our communication in another direction. Not the one usually followed by most companies, in the apparel business, at least when there's an obvious connection between product, model and merchandising. I'm aware that, having a relatively big budget, it would be like throwing money away if we only explained that our product is better than the competition's. Advertising should give something more... That's my work, to report something exists. We can't be like ostriches who put their head in the sand." – Oliviero Toscani (Ganesan and Thota, 2003)

Due to his radical campaigns, many people criticized Toscani. But Toscani believed he had achieved his objective. Since he had joined Benetton, the company's sales had grown more than twenty times. As he once remarked:

"Most good ads are forgotten after six months, but who still remembers the Benetton ad with the priest kissing the nun? Ten years later and people remember! That's immortality!" (cf., Ganesan and Thota, 2003)

5.2.2 Dolce and Gabbana

Dolce and Gabbana outraged a lot of people with this following advert, which demonstrate a woman being overpowered by a gang of men.

From the perspective of Dolce and Gabbana, they are satisfied that everybody is keeping an eye on their advert and will never forget the brand. (cf. Bonilla, 2007)

The Company was forced to pull the campaign of extremely sexual ads in 2007 which some believed glorified gang rape.(cf. Bahsin, 2011)

In an Interview, NOW Foundation¹⁴ President Kim Gandy said, *“It is in Esquire, so they probably don’t think a stylized gang rape will sell clothes to woman, but what is more likely is that they think it will get them publicity. It’s a provocative ad but it is provoking things that really are not what we want to have provoked. We don’t need any more violence.”* (Now Foundation)



Figure 10 Dolce&Gabbana Ad in 2007- banned¹⁵

¹⁴ NOW Foundation- National Organization for Women is the largest women’s right organization in the United States

¹⁵ <http://es.advertolog.com/dolce-gabbana/impresos/dolce-gabbana-10293405/> (viewed on 23.06.2014)

5.2.3 Tom Ford

In 2008 the images of the campaign of Tom Ford were shot by star photographer Terry Richardson features multiple full frontal shots of Brazilian male model Alex Schultz while his female companions flaunt their own Brazilian waxes. The numbers of the published photographs even include simulated exhibitionist acts while a gentleman dressed in a sharp Tom Ford suit enjoys the view. (cf. trendhunter, 2008)



Figure 11 Tom Ford Campaign in 2008¹⁶

Recent images to promote Tom Ford for Men do not disappoint with provocation either, as the company returns to what it does best, photographs designed to shock, with a good dose of nudity. (cf. Marie Clare 2007)

To promote the fragrance the images were understandable demure. Again the company hired Terry Richardson to shoot them. The most risqué photographs show a woman with the fragrance bottle between her naked thighs, another image view a woman clutching her bare breasts with the bottle wedged between. (cf. Marie Clare 2007)

¹⁶ <http://just-like.net/page/news/nackig> (viewed on 23.06.2014)

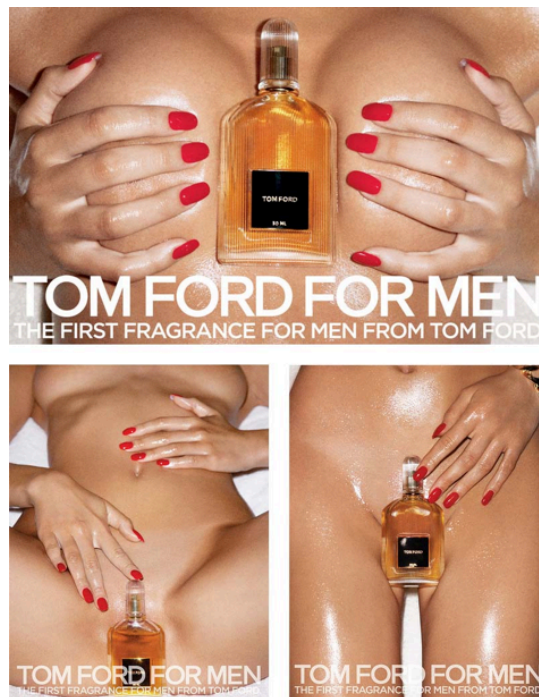


Figure 12 Tom Ford fragrance campaign¹⁷

A spokesman for Tom Ford Beauty explained to swap the images like followed:

“We loved the original Marilyn Minter images but while on a shoot with Terry Richardson in Milan, we decided that a sharper, more graphic approach clearly communicated the bold and provocative mood of the fragrance. (cf. Marie Clare 2007)

5.2.4 Calvin Klein

If there would be an advertising motto for Calvin Klein, it would be “the more shocking, the better”.

In the early 1980’s the company was not afraid to present its adverts, which featured the 15-year-old Brooke Shields. In the advert she is seductively telling the camera that nothing came between her and her Calvins. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

¹⁷ http://www.global-customer.com/marketing-to-global-customer/napoli/fragrance_tom%20ford.html
(viewed on 22.05.2014)

However the Fashion house shocked with so many scandalous and provocative adverts, nothing induced the public more than the published campaign in 1995 that is also known as “kiddie porn”. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

In the advert a photographer shoots young male and female models in an empty wood-paneled basement. The man behind the camera ask the scantily clad models some uncomfortable questions, such as “Do you think you could rip that shirt off of you?” to a young male model, or to an other young man he ask “That’s a nice body, do you work out?” (cf. Barnett, 2010)

“Calvin Klein once said that Jeans are about sex. He is a master of shock, dread and sales.” (Barnett, 2010)

The companies own internal creative team craft its own campaigns; therefore the company spends a lot of money on top fashion photographer to shoot them. The 1955 campaign and the, in 2012 published controversial campaign of a threesome on a billboard were shot by Steven Meisel, who regularly works for Vogue and other fashion magazines. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

The provocative advert from 1955 (as mentioned above) was released on television, in print and on city buses, immediately generated indignation upon their release in summer that year. Groups of terrified parents and child welfare organizations disbelieved about the age of the participants in the campaign, as many of them looked to be under 18. Soon retailers joined the protest following uproar. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

The company has been asked to withdraw the advertisements, while other big retailers such as Macy’s were forced to contend with picketing protesters. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

Later that year in August, the volume of the outrage became too much for Calvin Klein to handle and the company withdrew the advertisement campaign. In an Interview with Newsweek, Klein said he was “shocked” by the reaction and he insisted the campaign had been misunderstood. He believed that people failed to understand that it is about modern young people who have an independent spirit and act as per their wish and cannot be told or sold. Also his intention was not to create a controversy, in spite of what some people might think. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

As pulling off the advertising campaign was not sufficient, the department of Justice opened up an investigation, according to a deluge of complaints, into whether or not the company violated child pornography laws. However, after obtaining proof that the

models were all adults, the lawyers dropped the case in November the same year. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

Even though Calvin Klein thought the campaign was misunderstood, it never stopped him from publishing more controversial advertisements, which stepped outside the boundaries of propriety. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

In 2012 for example, the New Yorkers complained about a racy foursome sex ad in Soho, in addition the company chose to replace it with a photograph of a female model walking out of the water in a red string bikini. (cf. Barnett, 2010)

In fact, in its 45 years, the brand has been criticized for promoting gang rape, violence, child pornography and drug consumption. The American Family Association, the U.S. Department of Justice, and even former president, Bill Clinton, have also targeted the adverts. (cf. Sanchez, 2013)

5.2.5 Desigual

On Mothers Day in 2014, the clothing company Desigual launched a shocking commercial in honor of the holiday, showing a woman who desires to be a mother. That much, that she is willing to poke holes in her stash of condoms to do it.

The advert, which was meant to be a joke, was designed as a form of protest to the restrictive abortion laws in Spain. However the costumers' response has been so deeply negative on their Social media accounts, that the company has since removed that part of the advert, but the regional government is considering banning it completely. (cf. Feldmann, 2014)

5.2.6 Agent Provocateur

This lingerie company has perhaps the most provocative and controversial adverts of all of the lingerie companies.

Agent Provocateur originates from the United Kingdom and was founded in 1994 by Joseph Corré and Serena Rees. Besides lingerie they just recently started to release

fragrances and cosmetics line. Today, Agent Provocateur is one of the most well known lingerie brands in the world. (cf. Michael, 2011)

From short horror films for its most recent lingerie collection to collections of S&M inspired underwear, it seems that every season the company is trying to overbid its last adverts. (cf. Michael, 2011)

The most rememberable commercial of the company is probably where the famous suspender clad singer Kylie Minogue is gyrating sexily on a rodeo bull before inviting all the men in the audience to “stand up... no?”

The ad was only allowed to air in cinemas but rapidly became a YouTube hit. (Stylist, 2014)

5.2.7 Diesel

Wendy Liebmann, president of WSL Strategic Retail a New York-based consultant says, “Their ads are like a secret code.”

Diesel says, “ We have a different view of things and we know people are sophisticated enough to get it.” (Edmondson, 2003)

Based in Molvena, a country town in northern Italy, Diesel spends a modest \$40million a year on Marketing, substantially in targeted media such as arty catalogues and MTV. The face behind Diesel is Renzo Rosso (58). (Edmondson, 2003)

The Diesel jeans advertisement displays political passion, depicting protesters in the act of standing up for their message. The signs say, “Kiss your neighbor” but their message is, “Buy Diesel jeans”. (cf. Clegg, 2011)

Diesel uses storytelling or narrative as a method to relate the images to the philosophy ‘Be Stupid’. The advantage for Diesel is that narrative is often taken for granted or appears to be ‘naturalized’. Narrative is simply a sign that is portrayed within a meaningful sequence which audiences attribute meaning to. Regarding ‘Be Stupid’ Diesel has build a narrative to induce its audience to look at ‘stupid’ in a different way, by characterizing it as an aspirational marker-using signification. (cf. Clegg, 2011)

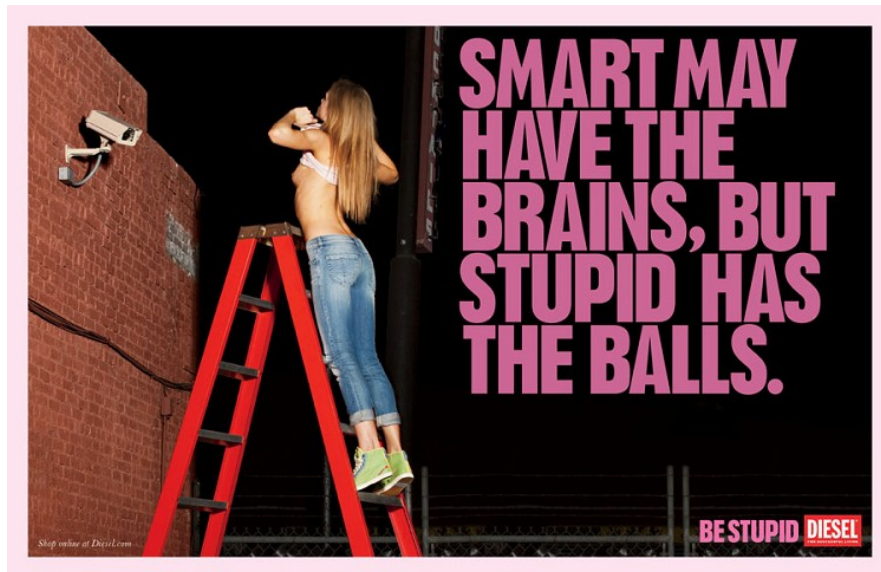


Figure 13 Diesel 'Be Stupid' Campaign¹⁸

Even though the key audiences for Diesel adverts are the twenty-something, also the doyen of haute couture, Karl Lagerfeld, is smitten with Diesel jeans. (cf. Edmondson, 2003)

5.2.8 Abercrombie& Fitch

Abercrombie& Fitch prefers only thin and beautiful customers.

This headline went all over the media in 2012, when Abercrombie CEO Mike Jeffries spelled out that he does not want larger people shopping in his stores. (cf. Lutz, 2013)

Robin Lewis, a retail industry analyst and co-author of "The new rules of retail" stated in an interview with Business Insider that Jeffries does not want his core customers to see people who are not "as hot as them" wearing his clothing.

People who wear his clothing should feel like they are one of the "cool kids". (cf. Lutz, 2013)

¹⁸ <http://www.creativeadawards.com/diesel-be-stupid-advertising-campaign/> (viewed on 28.06.2014)

Abercrombie is only interested in people with a lean body. Since Abercrombie does not want larger women wearing their brand they do not stock any woman's size above larger, or any woman pants bigger than size ten.

But not only the customers, yet only thin and beautiful people are encouraged to apply for employment. (cf. Lutz, 2013)

Since Abercrombie does not do any advertising, this is a perfect way to stay in debate. But this provocation includes the customer personally and reaches the emotion of a larger group in the United States, as the majority is overweight and wears plus size clothing. (cf. Lutz, 2013)

Other than, for example, Tom Ford with its provocation, where no one feels personally offended, Abercrombie was intensively discussed.

Greg Karber, a Los Angeles-based writer was bothered by the news and decided to give the company a rebranding. He visited those "Thrift Shops" and bought Abercrombie and Fitch clothing which he later donated to the homeless people on the streets of Los Angeles. In addition to giving away the clothing to the "not so cool kids" he also recorded his deeds and uploaded it on YouTube where the video went viral in no time. (cf. Lutz, 2013)

On June 27, 14 the Huffington Post posted an article about Abercrombie and Fitch that the company now has introduced Jeans in the size 000 (triple zero) since they have recognized skinny girls as a new target. Women, who have a hip measurement of a six or seven year old child, can only wear those Jeans.

Instead of fighting the questionable ideal of beauty, the company is now a dangerous step further - and this despite the fact that Abercrombie refused to produce clothing in any sizes above larger a few years ago. (cf. Metzler and Held, 2014)

6 Main issues in the fashion industry

This chapter provides a fair presentation of how the main two shocking issues in the fashion industry are exercised.

6.1 Children in fashion

Kids are heavily exposed to brands, from Disney to McDonalds, and they have been for years. (Friedmann, 2013)

Just like the older teenagers and young adults, they as well know, what it means to be part of the “club”. (cf. Friedmann, 2013)

Kids Fashion Week London

London welcomed the first ever Kids Fashion Week in 2013. The Labels who took part of the show included Paul Smith Junior, Junior Gaultier, Chloé and Little Marc Jacobs. However, this event raised questions about marketing to children. But is it really necessary to put children under pressure, as they already think that looking good is so important? Wearing Nike air max, Hollister t-shirts, Abercrombie& Fitch hoodies, to own an iPhone are just a few expensive brands, which are a “must-have” for many kids nowadays. (Sykes, 2013)

It probably looks like the children are having fun running the catwalk up and down, but the real message behind the whole show seems to be different. According to the article published by thedailybeast and written by Tom Sykes it seems that the message behind the show indeed is, that wearing expensive clothes is essential. (cf. Sykes, T. 2013)



Figure 14 London Kids Fashion Week¹⁹

One mother who thinks the same is the writer Tanith Carey, who is the author of the book 'Where Has My Little Girl Gone' a how-to on protecting girls from the pressures of premature adulthood. (Sykes, 2013)

"When I was there, I got quite caught up in it and obviously the kids were having a lot of fun," she commented. "It was cute to watch and the kids had a swagger to them. But no one is seeing the bigger picture on this."

"Our kids are under a lot of pressure already in terms of how they look, and events like this are really piling on the pressure. What are we really saying to our kids here? 'Yes, it is all about how you look. (Sykes, 2013)

Thylane Blondeau

Thylane Blondeau first made her prominence appearance back in 2011 when photographs of her in the December 2010 issue of Vogue Paris fueled debate about sexualization of children in the fashion industry. She started early, in October 2005, at the age of 4, Thylane walked in Jean-Paul Gaultier's spring show. (cf. Sauer, 2011)

¹⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2295770/Global-Kids-Fashion-Week-lands-London-bang.html>
(viewed on 20.06.2014)



Figure 15 Thylane Blondeau in Vogue Paris issue from Dec. 2010²⁰

Jenna Sauers a former child model and contributor to the popular feminist blog Jezebel, wrote an article in which she expressed appreciation for the satire:

“I personally found the Vogue Paris editorial refreshing. Sure, it was disturbing, but it seemed purposefully, knowingly disturbing—disturbing in the sense that it aimed to perturb and provoke a reader to question the fashion industry’s treatment of young girls as a kind of natural resource to be transformed into product, which is, you know, itself disturbing.” (Sauer, 2011)

²⁰ <http://itsybitsysteps.com/10-year-old-vogue-model-thylane-loubry-blondeau/> (viewed on 21.06.2014)



Figure 16 Thylane Blondeau for Jalouse, April 2014²¹

Nonetheless this picture is much more enjoyable than the ones which were published in Vogue Paris, hiring a child as a model for these images and positions is still a very controversial decision. In May 2012, Condé Nast International announced following statement, (Casserly, 2012)

“We will not knowingly work with models under the age of 16 or who appear to have an eating disorder. We will work with models who, in our view, are healthy and help to promote a healthy body image” (Casserly, 2012)

Others, however, were less understanding and damned Carine Roitfeld, the “queen of porno-chic,” for publishing the photographs of the 10-year-old child on Vogue Paris. (cf. Casserly, 2012)

²¹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2588272/Controversial-Child-Model-Thylane-Blondeau-Covers-Jalouse-Magazine.html> (viewed on 26.06.2014)

6.2 Anorexia

No Anorexia

Isabelle Caro died as a result of yearlong struggle with anorexia. Her lowest weight was 25kg. She was known for the anti-anorexia campaign where she was illustrated totally naked. (cf. Welt, 2010)



Figure 17 Nolita anti-anorexia Campaign in 2010²²

The Italian star-photographer Oliviero Toscani photographed Isabelle Caro in 2007 during the Milan Fashion Week as a deterrent for anorexia.

The Images of the young emaciated, by death scarred woman had shocked the world. Isabelle had just been released from the hospital, when the photos were taken. (cf. Welt, 2010)

That a model has to be skinny to be successful is not a secret anymore, since seen on the runways at the fashion shows in New York, Paris or Milan it is clear that models nowadays do not look as healthy as they used to be.

²² <http://www.olivierotoscanistudio.com/it/portfolio.htm> (viewed on 23.06.2014)

Ralph Lauren

A wave of criticism against anorexic-looking models was launched in 2009 with the publication of a Ralph Lauren's advert campaign, featuring model Filippa Hamilton, whose image was graphically edited to look exactly like those sketches of fashion designers. (cf. Spiegel, 2009)

The figure below demonstrates the extremely thin digitally edited Filippa Hamilton on the left, in contrast on the right, her real figure.



Figure 18 Ralph Lauren Campaign in 2009 ft. Filippa Hamilton²³

According to Spiegel Online the 1,78 meter tall and 54,5 kg light model was dismissed, after working with Ralph Lauren for 8 years, since, as Hamilton stated in an interview with NBC, was not thin enough and could not fit into their clothing anymore. The designer rejected all accusations; his opinion was, that Filippa Hamilton did not keep track of the commitments, which were listed in the contract. Anyhow, bloggers were discussing why the model's head looks bigger than her hips, as the model in the image looked suspiciously skinny. According to NBC the company later admitted that the photo had been digital edited. Hamilton said that this image is not a good role model, as young

²³ <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/models-incredible-shrinking-waist/story-e6freo8c-1225785380982?nk=79190a6a907865267448715f18a22dcb> (viewed on 16.06.2014)

women will look at the picture and think that it is normal to look like that, even though it is not. (cf. Spiegel, 2009)

The discussion over fashion's fascination with supermodels has continued unabated since then, with little turning away from the down-sizing of the healthy body, original 90's supermodels such as Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer or Heidi Klum are a size 4-6 and considered as plus size models nowadays, compared to the typically androgynous-looking size 0 models. (cf. Anne, 2013)

Brazil's Star Models You Are Not A Sketch Campaign

The Brazilian model agency "Star Model" has launched an innovative eating disorder awareness campaign in 2013 featuring the typical fashion sketch on the left and models digitally edited to look just like the illustration on the right. Digitally editing a real model to look like a fashion sketch has become a more recent trend. (cf. Anne, 2013)

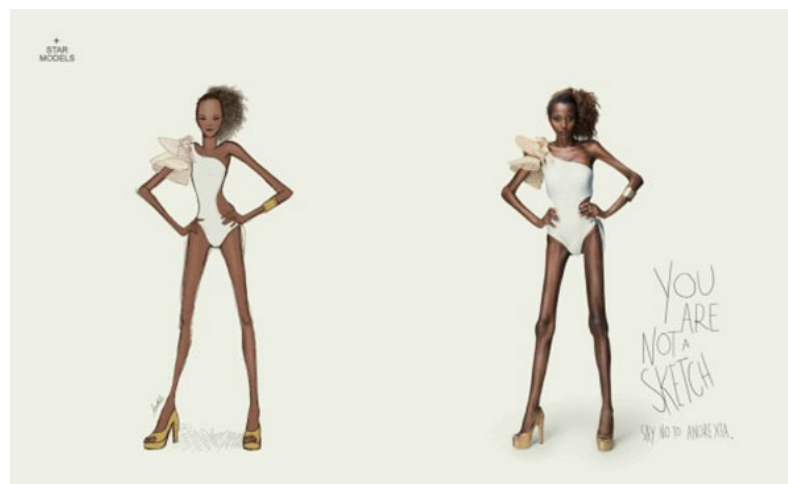


Figure 19 Star Model Advert in 2013 "You are not a sketch"²⁴

While Adam Green an American singer and songwriter commented: "I like these ads because they address the issue that anorexia seems to stem from the inability for people to distinguish reality from fiction. Barbie dolls don't have realistic body proportions,

²⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2311770/Powerful-anti-anorexia-ad-campaign-tells-women-sketch-using-models-fashion-illustration-proportions.html> (viewed on 24.06.2014)

but we should be teaching girls that they don't have to look like a Barbie doll before banning Barbie's. It's nitpicking a toy company versus actually making an effort to teach girls how to think healthy." (Dalymail, 2013)

7 About American Apparel

The second part of this Thesis is principally concerned with the shocking and provocative advertising strategies of American Apparel. Other than United Colors of Benetton, who utilizes shock and provocation, to put the attention in their advertising on world issues, American Apparel provokes by illustrating half naked young women yet looking innocent and under-age.

7.1 The Company American Apparel Inc.

The face behind American Apparel is Dov Charney (44). He is the founder and chief executive of the largest T-shirt manufacturer in North America. He is being called an excellent businessman, an amateur pornographer, a Jewish hustler and a man with a social mission. He is admired for self-made creating one of America's most successful fashion retailers, for advertising his company's sexually suggestive approach to advertising and for treating his workers much better than his rivals. He is also envied, loathed and criticized for all of those things. (cf. The economist, 2007)

"Dov Charney a man whose joint obsession with decent business ethics and sex, [is] as controversial as he is successful" - Polly Vernon, The Guardian

American Apparel's rise is a remarkable success story. Dov Charney opened his first shop in 2003 in Los Angeles, California, in keeping with the motto: 'sweatshop-free'. (cf. Fenner, 2011)

Today he has 248 stores in 20 countries, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, United Kingdom, Ireland, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Japan, South Korea and China, (Investors American Apparel, 2014) selling causal clothes for men, woman and children. American Apparel's sales for 2006 were an estimated \$300m. Its unbranded, brightly colored and moderately priced T-shirts, sweatshirts, underwear and jeans have become widely popular among the young and well travelled crowd that Mr. Charney says represents the „world-metropolitan culture“.

Since Dov Charney went public with American Apparel he often is confronted with his personnel and journalist's, who complain of sexual abuse and harassment from sides of Charney. In 2011 the was reported by former American Apparel employee Kimbra Lo who stated that she was sexual abused by Dov Charney. (cf. Fenner, 2011)

However Mr. Charney knows how to make his workers happy. He is a pioneer of the fair treatment of garment workers. Which is why he provides expensive benefits. As the minimum payment wage in California is \$8 per hour²⁵, American Apparel pays its employees amounts to \$12 an hour. Their staff can also buy subsidized health insurance for \$8 a week, which costs the firm \$4-5m a year. The workers are entitled to free English lessons, subsidized meals, which cost American Apparel roughly \$500.000 a year, and also free parking. (cf. Press release, 2007)

The employees produce more than 1 million garments per week, which includes 120,000 t-shirts each day in 52 different colors. The more garment they make, the more money they can earn.²⁶

Dov Charney gives his contented workers the credit for his success. Treating them well implies that they are less likely to quit, which saves the company money.

On June 19, 2014 the clothing and accessories retailer American Apparel Inc. has ousted its controversial founder Dov Charney as chairman and moved to fire him as chief executive and president amid an ongoing investigation into alleged misconduct.

Allan Mayer who was appointed by the retailer as one of the two new co-chairman said in a statement, "We take no joy in this but the board felt it was the right thing to do." (cf. The Guardian, 2014)

²⁵ www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_minimumwage.htm (viewed on 26.05.14)

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rLLDFrujAg> (viewed on 20.06.2014)

7.2 Advertising strategy of American Apparel

The advertising strategies of American Apparel have always been provocative. Those scantily dressed models, which the viewer can see in American Apparels advertising, are mainly friends or employees of Dov Charney but also porn-artists and actors, and the CEO takes most the photographs himself. With every single advert the viewer can tell that it is American Apparel. However this strategy seems to be working out for the company even though they were banned in the United Kingdom several times and writers always publish articles about, how the company exaggerates, they have relied upon it for decades.

7.2.1 Advertising overview

Over the years- print advertising

2003

In 2003 when Dov Charney inaugurated his first American Apparel Store, the advert he presented was overly sexist. The picture below shows one image of the campaign „Cotton, you can feel how good it looks“. The viewer sees the immigrants Thais Lima and Tida Schwartz, both under employment of American Apparel. They are sitting on a sun chair only with a panty on.



aa Sweatshop Free T-shirts Made in LA
americanapparel.net
 US Factory / HQ 747 Warehouse St. Los Angeles, CA 90021 Phone: (213) 488-0226 Fax: (213) 488-0334



Figure 20 American Apparel Ad in 2003- Cotton you can feel how good it looks²⁷

²⁷ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2004

A year later American Apparel appeared with the advertisement seen below of the Canadian Student Sophie who bends over a man she met there on the streets of Canada and who works for American Apparel. Also he took that picture the following evening that day.



Meet Sophie.

Italian and French Canadian, Sophie is currently a student in Montreal. She met an American Apparel employee on the street there, and was photographed the following evening.



American Apparel™

Made in Downtown LA
Sweatshop Free—Brand-Free Clothes

Retail Locations:

Echo Park 2111 Sunset Blvd. (corner Alhambra) (213) 484-6484	Little Tokyo 374 E. Second St. (corner Central) (213) 687-0467	West Hollywood 104 S. Robertson Blvd. (corner Third) (310) 274-6292
Now Open—Hollywood 6962 Hollywood Blvd. (corner Orange) (323) 465-6312	Los Feliz 4663 Hollywood Blvd. (corner Vermont) (323) 661-1407	To stay on top of new store openings visit our web site: www.americanapparel.net

American Apparel is 3,200 people earning a fair wage.

Designers, marketers, engineers, knitters, sewers, and administrators all working together out of a vertically integrated factory in downtown Los Angeles.

Thirty-five non-franchised stores worldwide with more on the way. Forty thousand wholesale clients, part of the family. One million garments served up each week.

Taking on the system.
One T-shirt at a time.
Capitalism. Working.

Figure 21 American Apparel Ad in 2004- Meet Sophie ²⁸

²⁸ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2005

During 2005 American Apparel published the up side down image below, viewing Sofia lying in the ground and just wearing the American Apparel Fleece Zip Hoodie. However she looks like a teenager, with a tempting expression. As most posters this one as well has a story on it about Sofia who again is an immigrant and American Apparel employee.



Figure 22 American Apparel Ad in 2005- Viva México City!²⁹

²⁹ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2006

In 2006, for their latest Store in the Netherlands in Amsterdam, American Apparel illustrated the unnamed girl on the poster spreading her legs with the words Now Open.



Figure 23 American Apparel Ad in 2006- Now Open³⁰

³⁰ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2007

In 2007 the image of this young girl was published in iD Magazine in an editorial about the company. However, what shocks the audients is that this is not the model's, Shasha Gaye-Hunt's, real skin color. (mwza., 2007)

This image has some kind of racist content, as pink lips and black colored skin refers to "blackface"³¹

Many people were shocked by that image and discussed it on online platforms such as on blog posts.



Figure 24 American Apparel Ad in 2007- Sweeter than candy. Better than cake.³²

³¹ Blackface-Makeup for a conventionalized comic travesty of Black people, especially in a minstrel show. (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/blackface>) (viewed on 27.06.2014)

³² <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2008

Since American Apparel uses their own employees to promote its brand, other employees also want to be featured on the company's website. In 2008 the employee seen below clicked pictures of herself and sent them in, which soon were published on their website.



American Apparel®

Figure 25 American Apparel Ad in 2008- Self Portrait³³

³³ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2009

In 2009 the campaign Flexfleece demonstrated a young woman who looked under age only wearing a short black panty and an open fleece jacket, her breasts almost visible for the viewer.

The advert was banned in the UK. (Aditham, 2009)



Figure 26 American Apparel Ad in 2009- Flexfleece³⁴

³⁴ <http://www.americanapparel.net/presscenter/adarchive/index.html> (viewed on 11.06.2014)

2010

In 2010 Dov Charney sat down with two of his creative directors and created posters showing drawn models only wearing hosiery, one of the posters is shown below. Even if there are no real people shown, the ASA banned eight out of the nine ads, because the images were considered inappropriate for a website that could be seen by children. (Eleftherou-Smith, 2012)

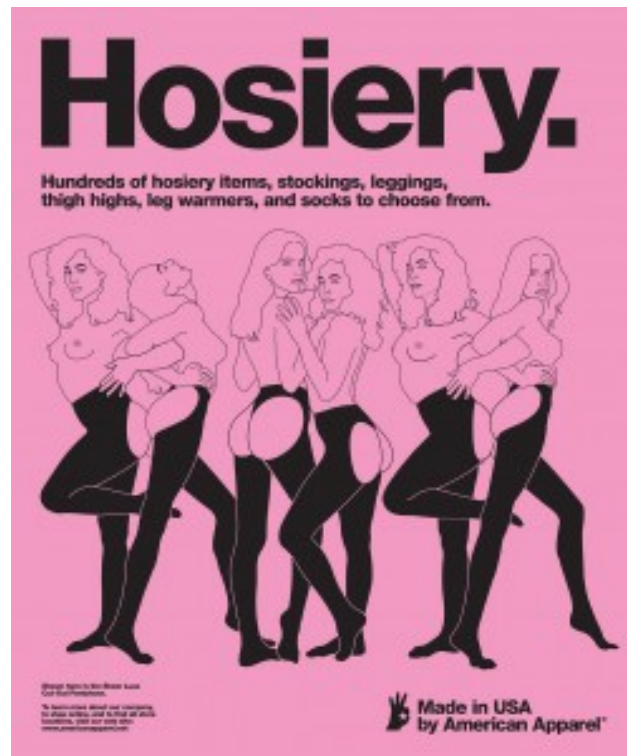


Figure 27 American Apparel ad in 2010³⁵

³⁵ <http://www.signature9.com/style/fashion/american-apparel-goes-back-to-the-drawing-board-ditches-models> (viewed on 27.06.2014)

2011

„American Apparel, known for their immodest advertisements, pushes the envelope with a close-to-nude pantyhose model featured in the Lower East Side“ (Guman, J., 2014)³⁶ The Company came up with this poster in 2011 on Time Square.



Figure 28 American Apparel Ad in 2011³⁷

³⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/21/sex-in-the-sky-most-scand_n_241965.html?slidnumber=1#slide_image by Jessica Guman (viewed on 28.05.14)

³⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/21/sex-in-the-sky-most-scand_n_241965.html (viewed on 28.05.2014)

2012

The following Advert is a little more shocking and was as well banned in the United Kingdom in 2012. In this advert not the model, but the photographer is an American Apparel employee. Again the viewer obtains a small bit of information about the Pullover, which Steffi is wearing. It is not the first time that an advert of American Apparel was banned in the United Kingdom. The Company's rebuttal to ASA is that these images feature normal, real life women. (heartymagazine, 2012)



Figure 29 American Apparel Ad in 2012- Hello. Meet Steffi³⁸

³⁸ <http://heartymagazine.com/tag/american-apparel> (viewed on 28.05.2014)

2013

In 2013 American Apparel published the advertisement seen below, which was banned in the United Kingdom because, according to United Kingdoms Advertisement Standards Authority, a single complaint of an unnamed woman who found the advertisement was offensive and overly sexual. (Edwards, 2013)

It also contains an employee of American Apparel. The Image as well describes her position at American Apparel and her hobbies. The viewer can also get the information of what she is wearing.



Figure 30 American Apparel Ad in 2013- Meet Trudy³⁹

³⁹ <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-uk-banned-these-american-apparel-ads-and-wants-them-removed-from-the-internet-2013-4> (viewed on 28.05.2014)

2014

The latest advertising campaign of American Apparel shows the young woman Maks who works within the company since 2010. She is the current face for their latest advertisement. It shows her topless with the words „Made in Bangladesh“ blasted across her chest. The picture also shows her wearing a High Waist Jean, which the viewer cannot really see. The short story under the picture describes Maks life in Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh where she was born, and the life she lives now in California. The point of the story is that, not like many other companies who manufacture in Bangladesh, the High Waist Jean which, Maks is wearing, was manufactured by over 20 American workers in Los Angeles, which were all paid a fair wage and have access to basic benefits such as health care.



Meet Maks.

She is a merchandiser who has been with American Apparel since 2010. Born in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, Maks vividly remembers attending mosque as a child alongside her conservative Muslim parents. At age four, her family made a life changing move to Mirna Del Rey, California. Although she suddenly found herself a world away from Dhaka, she continued following her parents' religious traditions and established her Islamic faith throughout her childhood. Upon entering high school, Maks began to feel the need to forge her own identity and ultimately distanced herself from Islamic traditions. A woman continuously in search of new creative outlets, Maks unreservedly embraced this photo shoot.

She has found some elements of Southern California culture to be immediately appealing, but is striving to explore what lies beyond the city's superficial pleasures. She doesn't feel the need to identify herself as American or Bangladeshi and is not content to fit her life into anyone else's conventional narrative. That's what makes her essential to the message that in Los Angeles, and unequivocally, a distinct figure in the ever expanding American Apparel family. Maks was photographed in the High Waist Jean, a garment manufactured by 23 skilled American workers in Downtown Los Angeles, all of whom are paid a fair wage and have access to basic benefits such as healthcare.

Made in USA—Sweatshop Free
Operated by Dov Charney

American Apparel

Figure 31 American Apparel Ad in April 2014- Made in Bangladesh⁴⁰

⁴⁰ <http://kingquickwitted.wordpress.com/2014/03/13/meet-maks-american-apparels-new-bengali-muslim-model/> (viewed on 17.05.2014)

Other advertising strategy

The Images and posters seen above are the main advertising strategies, which American Apparel applies, in addition to this; in early 2014 a growing controversy in the window of American Apparel caught the viewers attention. The clothing company already known for its shock value and advertisements suddenly had public hair on all of their mannequins on their New York located store. The shock parts of the advert seemed to work, since people stopped on the sidewalk to get a closer look and even a photograph of the hairy mannequins. The message behind this was to represent, “rawness and realness of sexuality. (Adams and Mayer, 2014)



Figure 32 New York located American Apparel store in 2014⁴¹

⁴¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/16/american-apparel-pubic-hair-mannequins_n_4610688.html
(viewed on 26.06.2014)

7.2.2 Background

As seen above American Apparel likes to present their own employees and their Stories, especially the Immigrants, often illustrated nude and under-age look-a-like women with an innocent look. The published photographs cannot be compared with other clothing companies advertisement. American Apparel stands out with the natural looking women they illustrate with a softer and curvier body than other models.

However, this might be one of their objectives when creating a campaign or advert. Additionally, there is no company in the fashion industry, which uses that many of their own employees as their models for different campaigns.

Each time American Apparel launches an advert showing scantily dressed images of models, they always risk prohibition of the advert by the ASA. But since a large number of people publish articles and blog posts of almost every new campaign they launch, it profitable to the company, because they do not need to spend huge funds on advertising and the media is playing a crucial role by publicizing it.

American Apparel does not book expensive models and Dov Charney mostly shoots the pictures for the campaigns himself. The pictures can mostly be seen on the company's website, but also print media on billboards are a main advertising form for American Apparel.

8 Opportunities and Risks of American Apparels provocation

In this chapter the opportunities and risks, which American Apparel enters with its strategy will be discussed shorthand.

8.1 Risks of American Apparels' provocation.

- Banned several times by the ASA
- Children who access the Internet have also access to their website and since American Apparel shows a lot of nudity on their homepage, it does not have a good influence on them
- Too much of provocation can poach customers
- Not a surprise shock factor, since most people know what to expect from their campaigns, so customers might not observe the images
- Similar images every season, appear monotonous
- No creativity in their adverts
- Their advertising campaigns do not have much relevance with the clothes they sell
- American Apparel risks the danger, that they could overstate the goal of provocation and the audience, especially the female customers feel offended
- The planned effect of their strategy can also be destroyed by too much provocation
- Even though many people think Dov Charney was a good CEO, he still has a bad reputation within the Company, since he harassed his female employees.

8.2 Opportunities of American Apparels' provocation

- The Company represents curvy and softer looking body types in their adverts, natural looking women with minimal to no make-up on, which tells their female consumer to “be happy with how you look”
- Recognizing an American Apparel advert is easy, since their images are brand marked in the consumers head and do mostly look-a-like
- Sweatshop-free and US-made clothing is a good reputation and should be focused more upon.
- Short stories about the employees gives the consumer the feeling to be closer to the company
- Employees have pleasant working conditions, since American Apparel pays its employees amounts of \$12 and more an hour. They also can buy subsidized health insurance for \$8 a week and acquire free English lessons and subsidized meals
- Since most people are in knowledge of Dov Charney harassing his female employees, it might have been a good decision to dismiss him.
- The company can now approve its image

9 Result and Summary

This Thesis exhibits the fact that fashion companies use provocation in their adverts for achieving different effects. Benetton utilized shock advertisement, first in the 90's, to call attention to public problems such as AIDS, racism or in cooperation with World Food Program, for Food for Life.

American Apparel in comparison appears with almost identical campaigns and images every season, illustrating young women, mostly wearing only one piece of clothing, often photographed by Dov Charney in a provocative pose.

It seems that the reason behind those images and chosen models which American Apparel utilizes is to give the audience of their advertising a different way of optimal body type, not the typical skinny anorexia-looking model. However to stay in discussion may also be part of the strategy, since an image does not require half naked women in sexy yet provocative poses to communicate this message.

American Apparel need to find modern methods if they are aiming at success with their advertisement. Sex, as means of provocation, cannot be termed effective anymore. Since sexy dressed women and provocative looking images are being published on placards and telecasted via commercials, the consumers do not perceive them as much as it was in the case in the past.

The unentertaining adverts will not be effective in long term. Other fashion companies are much more creative with provocation For example, Agent Provocateur utilizes Storytelling, by releasing clips with a shock factor.

Everyone is aware of the company can easily recognize an American Apparel advert, even without the name on the placards.

Dov Charney and Mike Jeffries stand out differently, because as soon as they talk about fat and overweight people, apparently a public discussion on Facebook and Twitter expatiates like wildfire.

But what usually remain unforgettable are not malicious, body fascist and sexist statements of the founder, but the name and logo of the Company.

A few shocking statements about overweight people which they refuse to employ and welcome as customers in their stores and in no time, there is an outrage on social media. In the end, thousands of repetition of the company's name will be mentioned and additionally, numerous television reports and articles of shocked bloggers and journalists.

Overweight persons are also not employed in the stores of Calvin Klein, DIESEL, Gucci or Prada. This generally has to do with the brand image, but these companies do not admit it, because negative headlines dismantle their image.

The fashion industry knows what their provocation triggers, rarely it is being used unconsciously. Maybe Dolce & Gabbana did not display a rape when they first presented the promotional poster (cf. p. 27) recruited in 2007, since the woman does not look terrified, but it seems obvious if a woman is held by a man, while others are watching. There are certainly people who find the image is not as tragic and take it with confidence. Everyone absorbs advertising differently, some feel attacked, and the others do not.

American Apparel was confronted with many negative headlines in recent years, often made by billboards, and certainly it is also due to Dov Charney, who as a result of sexual harassment to his staff, negatively influences the company's image, since he also represents, brand and company.

After Dov Charney has been terminated, the company probably can now rectify its image by investing more in advertising, making professional recordings and do not conveying their advertising message too sexist.

Since advertising reflects a company and the products they sell.

In general, it is safe to say that American Apparel cannot reap benefits with the help of advertising. There is less creativity behind the images and the shock factor remains low, since only this kind of advertising by the company is known. On top of that, their advertising has less relevance to the clothes they sell.

American Apparels' clothes act through its Basic style almost "timeless", and still, they are not suitable for everyone. The company has formulated a target group, which they should focus on, in order to improve their image and increase revenues.

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Tom Ford reveals controversial ad campaign, Aug. 20th, 2007

<http://www.marieclaire.co.uk/news/celebrity/160319/tom-ford-reveals-controversial-ad-campaign.html> (viewed on 22.05.2014)

Tom Sykes: *The controversial Kids' Fashion Week*. March 21st, 2013

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/21/the-controversial-kids-fashion-week.html> (viewed on 20.06.2014)

Top 10 most risqué adverts

<http://www.stylist.co.uk/life/top-10-most-risque-adverts#image-rotator-1> (viewed on 01.06.2014)

When ads cross the line, Jan. 3rd, 2008

<http://www.trendhunter.com/trends/tom-ford-ss08-cross-line> (viewed on 23.06.2014)

Appendix

Is it okay for a 16 year old 'role model' (Miley Cyrus) to sing and dance on a pole, at a show, which is designed for children?



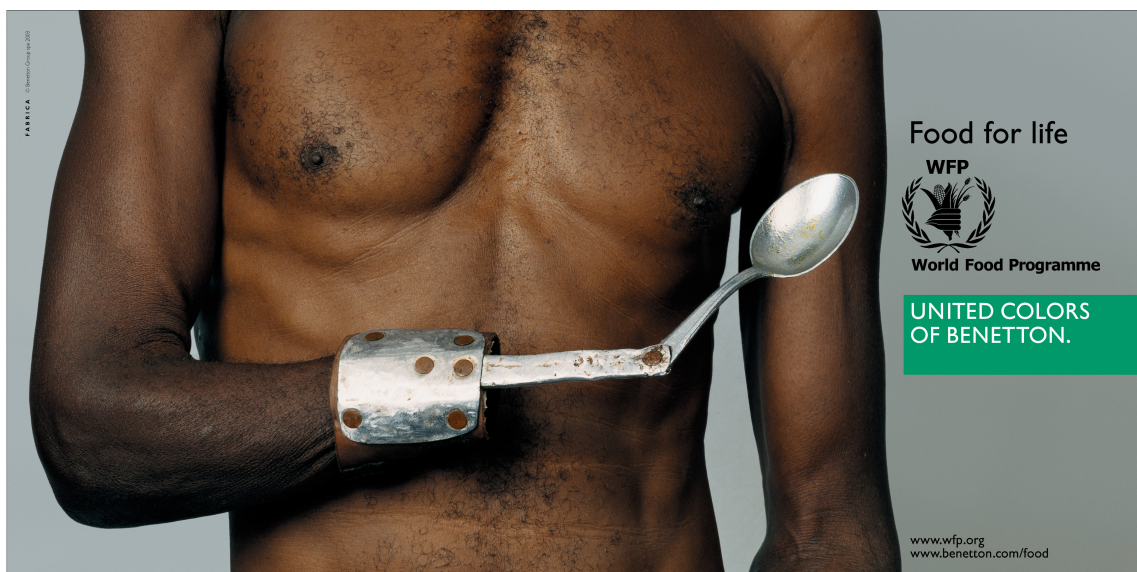
Old Spice commercial with Isaiah Mustafa aka. The man your man could smell like



Rihanna is wearing a custom made dress from the Designer Adam Sekman in June, 2014.



Benetton's campaign Food For Life in cooperation with World Food Program



Kylie Minogue in Agent Provocateurs commercial, which got banned



Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my unaided work. All direct or indirect sources are acknowledged as references.

This paper was not previously presented to another examination board and has not been published.

Hamburg, July 8th, 2014

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Sharanjit Kaur