

Autonomy & Advertising

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Crisp, R. (1987, July). Persuasive advertising, autonomy, and the creation of desire. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 6(5), 413–418.

Safer, M. (Reporter). (2003, October 26). Undercover marketing (Season 36, Episode 5) [TV series episode]. In M. Weitzner (Producer), *60 minutes*. CBS News Productions; CBS Productions.

Optional: Vranica, S. (2002, July 31). Sony Ericsson campaign uses actors to push camera-phone in real life. *The Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1028069195715597440>

Optional: Poppick, S. (2014, December 3). 10 subliminal retail tricks you're probably falling for. *Money*. <http://time.com/money/3069933/ways-companies-trick-you-into-buying-more/>

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. According to Roger Crisp, what is the difference between an autonomous purchase and a subliminally-inspired purchase? How is this difference explained in terms of Crisp's distinction between first-order and second-order desires?
(While Crisp's example of subliminal advertising in a cinema for ice cream has been shown false, see the article by Susie Poppick for better examples of subliminal advertising.)
2. Why reasons and arguments does Crisp provide to justify his claim that persuasive (as opposed to informative) advertising is immoral?

(Crisp's organization is extremely awkward—do not write your papers like this!—just try to figure out how his various claims are supposed to show the immorality of persuasive advertising.)

3. Towards the end of the article, Crisp considers the argument persuasive advertising is not immoral when it is done for products the consumer would have bought anyway.

Why does Crisp believe that even in those circumstances, persuasive advertising is still immoral?

4. The video clip from *60 Minutes* talks about how, in 2002, Sony Ericsson implemented a marketing campaign called "Fake Tourist", where trained actors pretended to be tourists in large cities. These "tourists" would ask regular people to take their picture using their new T68i mobile phone. The actors would then talk about the phone's features. (For more details, see the article by Suzanne Vranica.)

How do you think Crisp would assess this "stealth" form of advertising? How might this be similar to what Malcolm Gladwell says (in the video from *60 Minutes*) about stealth marketing?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.