

Implementing Selfie Pictures in Advertising: Reasons and Influences

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Abstract: An overview and a perspective of using selfie pictures in advertising has offered an understanding and an analyzing selfie phenomenon that helps to state reasons of using it and its benefits. Emerging methodologies will be examined with regards to analytical and practical studies while the practical study will depend on using focus group sessions. This might stimulate advertising creativity to achieve the designer's goals.

Keywords: Selfie, Reproduction theory, Uses and Gratification theory, Advertising, Technology, Active Audience.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, people have been increasingly used selfie pictures in social media and digital communication. Accordingly, designers integrate the idea of using selfie pictures in advertising, stressing on the need for image to change a person's attitude. In fact, effective ads depend on finding a new link between words, images, and situations to persuade and stimulate audience in order to achieve satisfying goals. This idea would be reached by pointing out and applying two main theories:- the first is the reproduction theory—a modern sociological theory— that helps the designer to understand the selfie phenomenon so as to apply it in advertising by creating ideas. At the same time, reactions of active audience become expected. The second is the uses and gratification theory—a well established mass communication theory- based on audience needs and desires. That is why designers starts to use selfie pictures in advertising design. Furthermore, it can help the designer to come up with creative ideas that serve both the client and the active audience.

Selfie Appearance

Researches show that the word 'selfie' was first used in 2002 online in Australia. Social media sites have helped to popularize the term, especially around 2012 when it was wide spread. First, the selfie was often spelled as (selfy), but the (ie) has become the accepted spelling later on. Oxford English Dictionary (2014), states that 'selfie' is an informal noun while the plural are 'selfies', and that 'selfie' has become the word of the year. It is a word of expression that has attracted a great deal of interest during the year 2013. Language research, conducted by Oxford Dictionaries editors, reveals that the frequency of the word 'selfie' in English Language has reached 17,000% since 2013.

'selfie', as a word, is associated with the 'ego', (I, me), which represents an inflated feeling of one's pride of himself. These implications remind us with the Greek, Narcissus who is known in Greek mythology to have fallen in love with his own image that was reflected in a water pool. This attitude of falling in love with one's self is known later as 'Narcissism'. It appeared as a concept in psychoanalytic theory, introduced in Sigmund Freud's Narcissism (Acocella 2014, p.77). In this respect, the above selfie could be considered a social or a cultural problem. However, selfies are often used nowadays to share an important experience and to express feelings at a particular time. It can be applied to advertising in a healthy self-love and make it useful for marketers and designers to achieve their goals. On the other hand, it is a kind of fun, enjoyment or interaction for active audience.

Accordingly, successful agencies try to make benefits by using selfie in ads to attract, interact, and affect audience and also to achieve their goals. This actually paves the way for applying the reproduction theory to explain the selfie phenomenon.

H1: Reproduction theory could state the process, factors, and tools of selfie phenomenon which may help the designer using selfie pictures in designing ads.

1 REPRODUCTION THEORY

Reproduction theory, in general, can clearly explain the selfie phenomenon to use it in designing ads in order to achieve the client's goals and audience's needs. It is a theory that has been used in different fields such as the genetic field (studying plants and human reproduction), social and cultural fields...etc. The idea of cultural reproduction was first developed by the French sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1973) who was concerned with education as well as its function. Another sociologist, called Christopher B.Doob sees social reproduction as an emphasis on the structures and activities that transmit social inequality from one generation to the next (Doob 2013, p.13).

There are two main edges for adapting this theory to implement selfie pictures in ads. The first is the mental imagery which is the understanding and representation of the outside physical world in a person's mind. It is responsible for adding new techniques to traditional stuff achieving the reproduction process, such as adding the selfie technique to camera usages. Second, the stimulus; for example, the internet stimulates the interaction of audience by introducing new worlds, places, and conversations that leads us to virtual reality and connects with one another via texting or social media. Thus, the internet becomes a fertile medium to produce the idea of selfie pictures.

In this study, the main importance of applying the reproduction theory is to add the selfie technique to camera usages which proves that reproduction theory depends on a dynamic process that can be used to help designers understand the selfie phenomenon. This is basically through the process, the factors, and the tools used to improve the idea of how the selfie has been reproduced by the active audience, therefore, stating, a framework that can be taken into consideration when designing a selfie ad. In this respect, the following lines will discuss the three main points for the reproduction theory, namely; the Process, the Factors and the Tools.

1.1 The Process

There are three main processes, each of them could be the one that generates selfie phenomenon. First, the *relay process* refers to the transition of culture and knowledge from one generation to another, depending on elderly people. Second, the *restore process* renews traditional techniques and already known stuff, depending on middle-aged people. Finally, the *innovation process* depends on creativity so as to make some new changes to stuff that are already known depending on youth.

Certainly, the innovation process is the ideal one for the study of selfie. This is because it touches the youth (young active audience) who incline new habits, and attitudes. Besides, they are the most up dated. They are also responsible for creating a new technique by using the camera to produce a selfie photo. For this reason, the study will focus on the active audience as represented by youth. Since theoretical researches split the audience into passive and active, this study will be concerned with the active audience. Audience can be either passive or active due to the message they receive or share. Some studies attempt to state the characteristics of the passive audience as easily manipulated, compliant, weak willed, followers, controlled, and dominated. On the other hand, the active audience is known to be engaging, involved, responsive, in control and free willed, with the message of the ad.

In conclusion, selfie in advertising seeks the active audience to interact with the ad. Because of the great involvement of technology and our busy world, audience might feel satisfied by interacting with media or devices as

a result of the technology language of this age. So, the active audience will either choose to be exposed to the ad and interact by eye movement only or really interact with it. In this case, selfie ads are found to leave an effect on the passive audience, turning it into active.

1.2 The factors

Technology changes and cultural changes are two main reasons behind the selfie phenomenon. Technology functions, in various social, economic, and cultural forces, enhance the idea of change. First, in the 1440s, printing technology occurred in books, newspapers and magazines. Second, the chemical technology emerges, upon which photography and movies have relied in most of their history. Third, electronic technology depends on electricity such as radio and television. Fourth, through the digital technology, a Harvard University mathematician, called Howard Aiken, created a digital computer. Accordingly, in 1990s, the internet was a revolution in computer communication (Domimick 2002, p.36) & (Vivian 2011, p.24). Also the digital age developed other devices such as cameras that are implemented in mobile phones, smart phones, tablets, and laptops. So, the attitude of using the camera in different devices helps us to create selfie pictures. *Cultural Changes*, The great explorations of previous centuries had brought different cultures together and, accordingly, scholars were able to share ideas and concepts. Furthermore, there was a change in the way people generated knowledge itself. (Domimick 2002, p.65). This is in addition to daily activities that the audience perform such as checking social media (internet), the mobile, and the way the audience interact with. This creates a reproduction of the camera use where the selfie becomes the most recent style in taking photos not only by one person, but by a group of people who can take it.

In conclusion, technology and cultural change are the main factors that have helped selfie to appear. Technology has endowed us with a rich type of media - Internet and the existence of cameras in almost all devices.

1.3 The Tool

Nowadays, active audiences are looking for technology most of the time. Using it and always seeking updates mostly satisfy us. So, one can call this age "*Inventions and Discovery Age*". Technologists try to innovate devices and programs to interact with audience. In fact, the Internet, computers, mobile phones, televisions, cameras, even the lighting system and the interactive glass technology are all devices that can highly interact with audience. Apart from the above devices that contribute to inventions and discovery, it is worth noting that augmented reality, virtual reality, and virtual communication add to these inventions and discovery age as they are all based on shared needs and interests locally and globally. Adding to inventions, the application that could be applied to our devices help to create, edit, share, and do a lot of professional modifications in pictures. For example, apps that add extra flair, Instagram, Adobe Photoshop, Cut Me and much more could be downloaded for free or paid.

In addition, technology has given us the luxury to have a camera in any device even if it is small and also with high-resolution photos. It can also help to improve photo effects, filters, and many editing processes that can be done by camera in an easy way. As a result, the audience are inspired by selfies to keep and share their moments as the portable camera exists everywhere even in pocket. However, technologists were not satisfied; they perceived the need of the audience to take a selfie within a group. So, they invented a selfie stick that a camera or a mobile could be supported with. Therefore, taking a selfie from a distance became possible. They also go further, taking the active audience with them by inventing another invention called "Nixie" where a small portable, wearable and flyable camera, takes off, captures moments, and comes right back. It is obvious, as stated above, that the traditional concept of advertising faced challenges in technology innovations. Accordingly, new methods of studies should be used due to meet different domains of sciences and different types of audiences.

H2: Uses and Gratification theory can serve the designer to create ideas using selfie pictures which fit to the audience need and implement the client goals.

2 USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY

This communication theory has been applied in advertising researches especially in papers that are concerned with internet. They represent an interactive audience, trying to gratify different needs. In other words, the theory presents the use of media for the gratification of social or psychological needs of the individual. Accordingly, it attributes the uses of media to a functional purpose. So, it can be defined as "a functionalist approach to the mass media framed in terms of people's motivations and needs" (Chandler and Munday 2011, p.336).

The theory emerged in 1940s as an early phase where audience were obsessed with media in various forms of behavior. The second phase was pioneered by Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch (1959, and 1970). This theory assumed that media users are goal-directed in their behavior, and are active media users. Furthermore, they are aware of their needs and select the appropriate media to gratify these needs. (Ko 2005, p-p.57-70), as in Oxford Dictionary of media and communication, Katz's said that the research question was not "what do the media do to people?" but "what do people do with media?". In fact, many studies state several needs and gratification for audience using media, even though different audience can choose the same media to gratify their different needs.

Consequently, some of these studies assert the mood choice such as boredom, stress, and relaxation needs. Others considered social needs to be much more significant. Yet, they almost all agreed on the coming five needs and gratification categories even in different titles such as Lasswell, Schramm, McQuail, Blumer, and Katz as follows: *Cognitive needs*; audience searching for knowledge or information, as "what's going on in the world?". *An affective need chooses* according to audience mood (emotion, pleasure...). *Personal Integrated needs* it is the self-esteem need which compares one's own life with other people or celebrates to explore individual problems and perspectives. *Social needs* socializes with family, friends and other relations even with discussion about what they hear or see with other people. *Tension free needs* escapes from the stresses of daily life as a source of entertainment.

The assumption of uses and gratification underscores the role of audience initiative and activity as the role of the audience is much more significant. In Media Effects, Bryant maintained that behavior is largely directed and purposive so that people typically choose to participate and select media or message from an array of communication alternatives in response to their expectations and desires. These expectations and desires emanate from, and are constrained by, personal traits, social context, and interaction. A person has the capacity for subjective choice as well as interpretation and initiates such behavior as media or message selection. This initiative affects the outcomes of media use. Our degree of initiative or activity, though, has been seen as more variable than absolute over the past few decades. (Bryant 2009, p-p.167-168)

In conclusion, the importance of this theory, in the research, is to approach different social and psychological circumstances of media use and to show how various factors influence media behavior such as lifestyle, personality, loneliness, isolation, need for cognition, media deprivation, and family-viewing environment. The impact of these factors on advertising and audience as well as the reasons of selfie phenomenon will be fully examined below with regards to application to different selfie ads.

3 IMPLEMENTING SELFIE PICTURES IN ADVERTISING

Advertising is a way to communicate with target audience, trying to persuade them with certain products, services, or ideas. So, it must highly represent verbal and visual meanings that affect the selected audience according to their needs, levels, and styles. In addition, the following part of the study will summarize the importance of the visual and verbal in selfie ads. Moreover, the analytical study will help to clarify elements, kinds, and uses of the selfie ad.

3.1 Visual

In advertising selfie pictures mainly express certain situations, represented by place and time. These situations vary according to the rendered message of the ad. A selfie taken with friends to sell a new product such as selfie stick, for

example, will be a joyful selfie ad. The situation of using selfie ads could also be applicable using selfie pictures with a new horror movie, creating a completely different impact upon audience.

3.2 Verbal

Due to the limited meaning suggested by selfie pictures in ads, the need to words accompaniment arises to deliver the message properly. Words play a vital role in using selfie pictures ads because they further clarify the idea. So, in case interactive audience did not get the message clearly from the image or the photo, they unequivocally get it through words.

H3a: Analytical study will demonstrate that visuals (selfie pictures) in ads are not enough and that verbals (message) are essential to clarify the idea of the ad.

H3b: Selfie pictures in ads need specific situations to be more applicable.

H3c: Is their a selfie picture techniques in capturing it?

H3d: Are the selfie pictures in ads restricted to one kind of ads as print ads or can they be applied to other kinds of ads?

3.3 ANALYTICAL STUDY

Nowadays, designers use selfies in their campaigns all around the world. Due to rare studies that describe, state, or even highlight the selfie in advertising, the present research will analyze 150 selfie ads spontaneously uploaded from two major cities (Ads of the World, and YouTube), as well as from different countries to be deeply analyzed, trying to find out kinds, ways, and techniques of selfie ads and to interact with the active audience to improve the selfie used in advertising field. For example, printed ads are like: “The Cape Times”, “National Geographic”, “Volkswagen”, “Lotto”, “Diesel” and T.V. ads like: “Turkish Airlines”, “KFC Romania”.

3.3.1 Analytical study results

The verbal (message) in ads is important; some of these ads, with different language, were hardly understood, depending on visuals only (Indian ads). Visuals (selfie pictures) can be applied to all situations (funny, dramatic, horrifying), and for products, services and ideas (food, technology, raising campaigns). In addition, selfie pictures used in ads are technically captured by three ways: first, a one can take his own selfie (real selfie). Second a selfie could be captured from external camera and finally an ordinary picture that selfie technique has been added to it uses editing program. Accordingly, the used technique in captured selfie is 60% real, those captured by external camera is 30% while selfie pictures taken by edited programs is 10%. Some selfie ads especially T.V. ads used more than technique in the capturing the selfie pictures (real and external camera). As for the use of selfie pictures, it has started in 2013 and the average of the selfie print ads to the selfie T.V. ads is 90% to 10%, which can prove that selfie pictures can be applied to all kind of ads. Gratification needs can be arranged from the plenty use to the minimal use as follow, affective needs, personal integrated needs, tension free needs, social needs, cognitive needs and finally selfie ads as highly considered interactive ads.

H4: Practical study will support the hypothetical points of the study or may change results.

3.4 PRACTICAL STUDY

This section of the study depends on focus group discussion sessions where small groups of informants (six to twelve people), guided by a facilitator or moderator, talk freely and spontaneously about a important theme to the investigation. Participants are chosen from a target group whose opinions and ideas are of interest to the research. Usually, more than one group session is needed to assure objective coverage (Scrimshaw and Hurtado, 1987: 15).

This was a sparkle for the facilitator (instructor) to make a challenge with participants (students) to apply the selfie pictures in advertising to advert different products, services, and ideas. So they choose their topic first and then the session begins as follows:

3.4.1 Topic

Designing magazine ads uses selfie picture, with respect to the message and target audience, with size A4. Nowadays the uniqueness of the magazine ad lies in its high quality of printing and the ability to rely on interaction with audience in some designs. It is also easy for students to print it. However, all topics that had been chosen were not suggested for students. In fact, they imagined companies and design logos too, using Illustrator and Photoshop programs.

3.4.2 Number of Groups

Three groups, one of them includes twelve students, and each of the other two includes six students, in spring 2015.

3.4.3 The facilitator

The facilitator uses a discussion guide with examples and samples of printed selfie ads, to keep the session focused. The discussion includes selfie pictures and the way they are used in ads. The importance of the message, the way it is applied in different topics, and the creative link between the selfie picture, topic, and message are also included. Finally, after students finish ads, some enhancements had to be applied using Photoshop and Illustrator programs to qualify these print ads.

3.4.4 The participants

Two groups are mass communication students and one is business students from Misr International University. These two faculties are familiar with advertising issues. They know how to apply certain strategies in market plans, using specific messages to target audience that helps the designer to achieve goals and benefits for the client. The students start to discuss different topics; they exert effort, trying to match the selfie picture with the message that represents the topic and affects the target audience.

3.4.5 Sessions

Each group holds three sessions; each session takes three hours duration. So the following part will show eight selected ads from the student's work that will be analyzed as the analytical part, to prove the hypothetical points of the study.

3.4.6 Practical designs

First ad: "Our Bubble Street"

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Real picture, captured that the student.
- *Verbal (Message).* "In charge to change"
- *Visual.* A selfie photo that has been captured from external camera.
- *Selfie meaning.* An organization named "Our Bubble Street" aims to change Egyptian attitude towards the streets to keep it clean.
- *Gratification need.* Personal integrated needs.



Fig. 1. "Our Bubble Street" (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Second ad: "Puzzle Express"

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Real picture, captured that the student.
- *Verbal (Message).* "Be Edu-tained".
- *Visual.* A real selfie photo.
- *Selfie meaning.* An organization named "Puzzle Express" aims to make the employees entertained in a train to remove all clashes and stress at work.
- *Gratification need.* Tension free needs.



Fig. 2. "Puzzle Express" (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Third ad: "FurLess"

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Using pictures from the Internet.
- *Verbal (Message).* “This could be my last selfie”.
- *Visual.* An edited selfie of the photo by using editing programs.
- *Selfie meaning.* An organization named “FurLess” aims to stop using animal skin and fur in making clothes.
- *Gratification need.* Affective needs.



Fig. 3. “FurLess” (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Fourth ad: “FurLess”

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Using pictures from the Internet.
- *Verbal (Message).* “I Can Wear Your Clothes Too”.
- *Visual.* An edited selfie of the photo by using editing programs..
- *Selfie meaning.* An organization named “Fur Less” aims to stop using animals skin and fur in making clothes.
- *Gratification need.* Affective needs.



Fig. 4. “FurLess” (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Fifth ad: “Choco Light”

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Using pictures from the Internet.
- *Verbal (Message).* “Eat Diet Go Light”.
- *Visual.* An edited selfie of the photo by using editing programs.
- *Selfie meaning.* A product named “Choco Light” aims to encourage audience to eat light chocolate and keep themselves in shape.
- *Gratification need.* Personal integrated needs.



Fig. 5. “Choco Light” (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Sixth ad: “Sabaho”

- *Selfie interactive magazine ad.* Using pictures from the Internet.
- *Verbal (Message).* “Join your selfie”.
- *Visual.* A real selfie photo.
- *Selfie meaning.* A café named “Saba7o” aims to encourage audience to participate by their selfie with the most popular selfie in 2014, by cutting picture and taking your selfie with them, then sending it by mail to participate in a competition.
- *Gratification need.* Social needs.



Fig. 6. “Sabaho” (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

Seventh ad: “Zenith”

- *Selfie magazine ad.* Using pictures from the Internet.
- *Verbal (Message).* “Dare to have a selfie with such a view”.
- *Visual.* A selfie photo that has been captured from external camera.
- *Selfie meaning.* A compound named “Zenith” aims to encourage audience to buy homes in this compound and enjoy the view.
- *Gratification need.* Tension needs.



Fig. 7. “Zenith” (Photoshop & Illustrator / Mac)

3.4.7 Practical study results

Practical study supports and proves the hypothesis 4.

4 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to set a new strategy, depending on reproduction, uses and gratification theories that help to create new effective ideas, depending on using selfie pictures in designing ads. With respect to the way audience use selfie pictures in their daily life, they are either posted on Instagram, Facebook, or exchanged on what's app. Audience found it interesting to capture their own pictures and moments as they even name faces that they like to take picture of like a ducky face. This leads Oxford Dictionary to state "Selfie" as word of the year, depending on audience needs. This was close to what happened in designing ads. The advertising agencies have attempted to make benefits of using selfie picture, gratifying audience needs to affect them correctly for achieving the client goals.

Reproduction theory in this research is represented as a methodological theory that illustrates the appearance of selfie pictures for designers to achieve their goals, using it in designing ads. This theory helps to highlight selfie pictures as a new technique, rather than a new invention for the camera use. For this reason, the study selectively attempts to understand the process which explains the innovation of selfie photos. This also helps to understand the factor; depending on technology and cultural change, and the tool; helping to spread the selfie photos.

In addition, audience need was an important factor in advertising field. Accordingly, uses and gratification theory was selected by the research to state a frame work, helping the desiner using selfie pictures in ads effectively.

Moreover, an effort has been taken to collect selfie ads that have been deeply analyzed, trying to sum up important findings to answer the hypothetical points, and to guide us in the practical study, depending on focus group methodology.

Finally this paper recommends that the academic and educational advertising schools use reproduction and uses and gratification theories as a new strategy that helps to create untraditional ads. This has become a basic requirement in the advertising market after the changes of the audience's needs in the process of the reactive communication. This will definitely result in a rise of the economy. Advertising agencies are also advised to use selfie pictures due to its positive impact, if employed properly.

CONCLUSION

Finally, one can sum up the findings of the study as follows.

- 1) The study attempts to mark the issues of selfie appearance as:
 - a) Innovation process depending on active audience
 - b) Technology and cultural change
 - c) Invention and discovery age.
- 2) Selfie ads depend on copywriting (verbal or message) to be powerful and clarify the idea.
- 3) Designers can use selfie as follow:
 - Capturing as if they are taking their own selfie.
 - Capturing the selfie from external camera.
 - Using editing programs to edit selfie to the photo
- 4) Using selfies in any kind of advertising: static as print ads, and dynamic as T.V. ad.
- 5) Using selfies various in advertising, such as funny, horrifying, or dramatic.
- 6) The analytical and practical studies show that the most used needs and gratifications, namely, tension free needs, affective needs, then personal integrated needs, and finally cognitive and social needs that are rare in selfie ads use.
- 7) The following chart is a simple summing up of the theoretical part of the study. The chart includes two main cycles, the first one is the Reproduction theory that explains the selfie phenomenon. The second one shows the Uses and Gratification theory which explains the need of active audience. This whole process helps in serving the designer to improve the selfie in advertising.

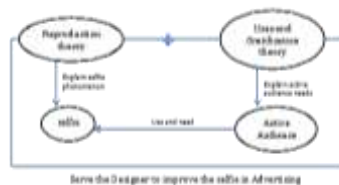


Fig. 8. "The Chart"

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