

RACISM AS A TOOL: THE MYTH OF RACE TO IMPROVE COMPANIES PROFILES AND STIFLE THE DILEMMA

**Shlash Alzyoud, University of Southern Mississippi
Ahmed Makhareh, University of Southern Mississippi**

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the representation of race in advertising through commercials that represent discrimination against black people in America. This paper also seeks to understand the meanings created in commercial scenes and how the company uses racism to improve its marketing profile. Through a textual analysis, the researchers argue that such commercials have two main objectives. The first is to enhance the credit of the company's brand image in the public's mind by exploiting social racism as a new advertising face. The second goal is to stimulate public debate about the historical dilemma in American society by arousing feelings toward black people and encouraging social justice. The company successfully displays black people's social tragedy and triggers sympathy. Such commercials would open the door to further discussion of racial discrimination facing black people today and may indeed contribute to stifling racism towards minorities in the world.

Keywords: Commercial, Advertising, Racism, Black People, Denotation, Connotation.

INTRODUCTION

Media, like education, is an integrative need. It can be used to bind society, to educate the community, to inform society, and to promote democracy (Makhareh, 2018). It is argued that media also plays a prominent role in focusing on the profound social dilemmas in societies, such as race and religion. For example, Alzyoud (2022) argues that US media has had a consistent approach of focusing heavily on topics of terrorism and extremism when covering topics related to Muslims. Racism remains a contentious issue in American culture to this day. The media, organizations, and institutions are trying to produce a discourse that mitigates racism in American society, especially racism against African Americans. The last heated discussion in this context was the killing of 46-year-old African American George Floyd, on May 25, 2020, by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota (BBC News, 2020). Discrimination in America targets people of color and is practiced by white Americans through everyday situations that bring together people of color and whites in American society. The topic of media influence on racism is a significant area of research. The impact targets the media bias toward African Americans. Media is a crucial institution in any society.

Abrams (2010) points out that there is insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of anti-racism media campaigns. The lack of evidence is due to poor methodology and insufficient media strategies to discourage prejudice and racism. Much research attempts to explore how the media contributes to racism through the messages and information that they broadcast daily.

Racial discrimination against African Americans has been based on the strengthening and perpetuation of the principle of racism in American society throughout a decades-long history. Historically, racial laws have strengthened and perpetuated social discrimination against black people in America. Laws against interracial marriage existed in 36 states in the 1920s and continued in effect in nearly half of the states in the 1950s (Wright & Rogers, 2011).

Discrimination against African Americans is based on many situations, such as those that occur in places of education, entertainment, shopping, etc. A national survey conducted by the Pew Center in 2012 indicates that 43 percent of black respondents believe that black Americans still face much discrimination, while only 13 percent of whites agreed with the survey. Furthermore, 14 percent of black respondents said they were confident that the local police treat black residents fairly like whites. A report by Edelman communications firm published in 2020 shows that 90% of black people in the US were concerned about systemic racism and racial injustice, and 57% of white people feel the same way (Edelman, 2020).

This study contributes to and builds on current research on the role of the media in racial profiling. While a significant portion of the existing literature studies and addresses how the media influence the formation of stereotypes against black people in society, the current research contributes to the media literature based on strategies for reducing prejudice. Ramasubramanian (2015) points out that the study of counter-stereotypes is still very new in the media influence literature. Future research should continue to clarify the differences between positive and negative models. It should clarify whether counter-stereotypes reduce racism, increase it, or allow for a combination of both processes.

In this paper, the researcher aims to examine the representation of race in advertising through a commercial titled *The Look* (see Appendix I), which represents imagery of discrimination against black people in America. The researcher also aims to understand the meanings that are created in commercial scenes and to understand how the company uses racism to improve its marketing profile through the method of textual analysis based on critical race theory. The researcher also makes recommendations for future media research regarding its impact on discrimination in society. In general, this paper seeks to answer two questions: 1) What denotation and connotation meanings fall within the commercial context? 2) how did the commercial use racism to market its brand?

Race

The term “*race*” was used for the first time to connect communities with descriptions of national identity. At a time when Europeans encountered foreign civilizations, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the race was given a biological meaning by the Enlighteners and philosophers. Wolf & Le Guin (2004) point out that “*race*” is a socially constructed description that categorizes people based on visual differences, and these differences are linked to indicate invisible differences. Salter et al. (2018) distinguish between racism and race that racism is a set of basic social-psychological processes such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination lying in the psychologies of individuals merely applied to the actual context of race.

This insight leads us to explain stereotypes. Many scholars and experts in racial discrimination have argued over the definitions associated with stereotypes. Historically, there have been many definitions of stereotypes. It is generally accepted that the primary objective of commercial advertisements is to encourage consumers to purchase goods or engage in services.

Ads with a clear objective to purchase a good or use a service have been discovered after observing the growing number of commercial adverts in the media. On the other hand, other commercial advertising display racial materials with subliminal messages, which sparked outrage, drew harsh criticism and offended people (Makharesh, Alharethi, & Campbell, 2022). Abrams (2010) suggests that stereotypes can be positive or negative, and they may be related to the perception that other groups may pose a threat. Nelson et al. (2010) notes that while stereotypes can be positive, they are primarily negative. He defines stereotypes as negative attitudes toward a group or group members. They are the traits that come to mind quickly when we think of groups. Adorno argue that the sociological type of stereotype relates to social groups that view stereotypes as fundamentally false and derogatory generalizations of the characteristics of a group. Kuper (2013) defines Stereotypes as “*relatively fixed and oversimplified generalizations about groups or classes of people. In practice, they generally focus on negative, unfavorable characteristics, although some authorities include in their conceptions of stereotypes positive social overgeneralizations as well*” (p. 843).

Consequently, addressing racial stereotypes stems from concern about negative images that may constitute a cultural obstacle for black people to prevent them from fulfilling their true potential.

Media and People of Color

Media research is making considerable efforts to examine the content that the media broadcasts to the masses and the effects of this content after many scholars in the field of communication confirmed that the media has excellent effects.

Bryant & Zillmann (2009) say that “when scholars talk about media effects, they are considering the social or psychological changes that occur in consumers of the media message systems or their social milieu or cultural values as a result of being exposed to, processing, or acting on those mediated messages. Five classes of media effects on individuals are often considered: behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive, emotional, and physiological” (p. 13). McQuail (2005) defines media influence as the consequences or results of media action or exposure. He adds that there are many identifiable media influences, such as behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive influences. Through their influence on public awareness, the media can influence cognitive change among people. The media may have influenced the behaviors and attitudes of media consumers. Media research has suggested that the mass media is a significant source of information about how African Americans and media portrayals contribute to creating public perceptions of African Americans (Davis, 2014; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008).

Television created white supremacy by adapting a white cultural ideology that glorified white norms and values. Staples & Jones (1985) argue that this ideology degrades blackness by establishing and preserving a race-based society. They are of the opinion that the media (television, radio, and newspapers) support this white cultural ideology that serves to perpetuate the current status of African Americans as second-class citizens. Stroman (1984) believes that the performance imitated by the viewer of the behavior shown on television is also taken as evidence of media effects. Campbell (1995) mentions that people of color are ignored, marginalized, and treated as less significant in American TV news coverage. People of color are routinely represented differently than white people, especially the negative stereotypes of people

of color as violent criminals. Additionally, he points out that television viewers perceive the occupational roles and personality characteristics African Americans portray on television as accurate. In contrast, viewers do not perceive the positive stereotypes of African Americans on television as realistic or accurate.

Thus, television can formulate how viewers think about African Americans (PunyanuntCarter, 2008). Stroman (1984) posits that when black people are portrayed in the media, they are generally represented in minor, submissive roles in comedy and other narrow roles that show nothing of the diversity of black life and culture. Dates and Mascaro (2005) warn that if African Americans, in particular, cannot reach the decision-making seats in the media, racism will persist through displaying caricatures and denying them television prime times and film projects.

Regarding anti-racism awareness-raising campaigns launched by commercial companies such as Procter & Gamble Company, Nelson et al. (2010) argue that public awareness campaigns may be required to promote more inclusive identities, including identities and ethnicity. Research is needed to test anti-racism campaigns and awareness-raising materials such as text screenplays and some short films.

The previous view is very much in line with the current research context regarding image analysis in The Look commercial to understand the types of awareness discussions it is trying to trigger about the prevailing racism dilemma in the society.

The Look

Procter & Gamble Company produced the commercial, The Look, in 2019 in the form of a short film and as part of its societal campaigns that contribute to reducing the historic racial legacy of the United States, sharing what it means to be “*black*” in American society, sparking dialogue, and inspiring people to help build a world free of racism. The company produced scenes through historical inspiration. The company says:

At P&G, we aspire to create a better world for everyone - a world free from bias, with equal representation, equal voices, and equal opportunity. As one of the world's largest advertisers, we are responsible for using our voice in advertising to be a force for good by addressing important societal and environmental issues while ensuring positive, accurate portrayals of all people. THE LOOK continues our efforts to combat bias from prior campaigns such as #LikeAGirl, Love over Bias, The Talk and Ariel Share the Load, Today and for generations to come (The look, n.d).

Critical Race Theory

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is a group of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power. Critical race theory builds on the visions of two previous movements, critical legal studies, and radical feminism. It derives its insights from some philosophers such as Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Derrida and radical American figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power and Chicano movements. The movement focuses on the many issues that traditional ethnic studies and civil rights discourses address. However, it places them in broader fields, including economics, history, context, personal and collective interest, sentiment, and the unconscious

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT first appeared as a workshop held at the St. Benedict Center in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1989. According to Gordon (1990), CRT arose out of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement, which failed to address “*the effects of race and racism in USA jurisprudence*” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 26). Critical race theory emerged as a legal study that sought to understand how the establishment and perpetuation of white supremacy and persecution of people of color came to be (Taylor, 2009).

There are five tenets of the critical race theory. First, the race is seen as an essential component of research and one of the essential features of the work of critical race theory. White critical studies are central to the communication studies field; it illustrates how white supremacy organizes the contexts of people of color in society and prevailing ideological contexts such as media, religious, educational, and cultural systems. The second tenet is to create counter-storytelling through narration and storytelling as a method of analysis. The narrative method seeks to produce narratives by people of color as counter-stories that mitigate the effect of ideological and cultural discourses that marginalize people of color. The third doctrine includes a critique of liberalism because it ignores the structural racism that people of color face and the history of racism in the United States, and its principles mislead peoples’ rights and opportunities. Also, liberalism’s principles are ineffective because of color blindness towards people of color, and they do not consider the persistence of racism. The fourth tenet is whiteness as property. This tenet is based on the fact that tenure, usufruct, and the right to dispose of have historically been propagated to create whiteness as a form of ownership. The fifth doctrine is the convergence of interests, meaning that the civil rights achieved for African Americans also benefited Whites. In addition, the civil rights that the legislation offered to African Americans had been enjoyed by whites for centuries. These granted rights are considered an interest in perpetuating the principles of American democracy (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Critical race theory provides a theoretical framework explaining how racial stereotypes affect the life of black people and how black people are treated based on race in society.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a process derived from the work of a structural theorist named Roland Barthes (1957), who believed that any cultural product could be decoded by reading the “signs” in the text. It is one of the primary tools media researchers use to understand how meaning is formed from informational texts. Textual analysis is an effective way to evaluate, compare, and understand informational texts and focuses on the primary media text itself (Bainbridge et al., 2011).

According to Storey (2008), Ferdinand de Saussure divided language into three main parts: the sign, the signifier, and the signified. The term signifier refers to the meaning of the inscription of the word, and the signified term refers to the mental image in the human mind. Saussure suggests that meaning results from the correlation between these elements.

According to Hasyim (2015), the signified is the mental representation of the sign and not what the sign refers to. In contrast, the signifier is the material aspect, that is, what the sign refers to. Chandler (2017) points out that the correlation between the signifier and the signified is known as signification. Signs can be words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects.

semiotics can analyze media texts, films, TV programs, cartoons, and advertisements (Bouzida, 2014). Chandler (2017) states that film and television coding includes camera action, editing, time manipulation, lighting, color, sound, graphics, and narration style.

Order of signification is the study developed by Roland Barthes (1957) that focuses on meanings in a language or sign. The signification can be defined as the interaction process of the signified and the signifier, the two are dependent on each other, and this process produces the sign (Roland Barthes, 1964).

Order signification is divided into denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation is located at the first level of the signification order and concerns the literal (first order) meaning of words (dictionary meaning) (Yan & Ming, 2015). Meanwhile, the connotation is the second order of signification which refers to one's point of view (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign (Chandler, 2017). Denotation is the mechanical reproduction of the film of the object at which the camera is pointed. Yan & Ming (2015) argue "*connotation is the human part of the process: the selection of what to include in the frame, focus, aperture, camera angle, quality of the film, and so on. Denotation is what is photographed; connotation is how it is photographed*" (p. 62). Bouzida (2014) argues that Roland Barthes (1957) believes semiology analysis can be applied to forms other than language. Barthes (1957) developed the denotation and connotation approach concerning images as a system of signs. According to this site, image analysis can be seen from two aspects: how and why it is represented.

The researcher believes that the connotation and denotation can help analyze the images in the commercial The Look. The denotation helps in understanding the logical or literal meaning of the image as it is analyzed on the visual or observable level. In contrast, the connotation helps understand the implicit meaning behind the image that is interpreted as it is analyzed at the implicit level.

Ramasubramanian (2015) conducted a study to examine strategies to help mitigate racial and ethnic stereotypes in media. The results show that exposure to news stories about admired African-American media celebrities reduces stereotypes and symbolic racist beliefs about African Americans among white American participants. These positive attitudes also translate into a growing desire to support affirmative action policies that provide racial/ethnic groups greater access to community resources. In other words, the results show that participants who read news stories about African American media celebrities, reading counter-stereotypes rather than stereotypes, reported less stereotypical perceptions of African Americans in general and reduced hidden racist beliefs about African Americans, which, in turn, increased support for affirmative action policies.

Stangor et al. (2001) conducted a study to examine the effects of consensus information on the endorsement of stereotypes and prejudices and to study the extent of the influence of consensus information on a change in the stereotype. The results revealed that the attitudes of European American college students became significantly more positive towards African Americans. Also, the results indicated that European-American undergraduates changed their attitudes after learning that other people held more favorable stereotypes than they initially held and became less negative.

Slone et al. (2000) examined the stereotypical attitudes of Israeli children 10-12 years old towards Arab and Jewish children. Text and audio-visual programs were used for six weekly sessions. The results confirmed that both programs reduce negative stereotypes towards Arab children in the experimental group

METHODOLOGY

The methodology relies on textual analysis to examine the private discourses made possible by the commercial through critical analysis of the commercial's (visual and audio) elements. As *The Look* is the case study of the research, and as it is a silent commercial, the researcher will focus on only analyzing the visual text within it. Bainbridge et al. (2011) points out that textual analysis is used to examine media and can be applied to media forms such as advertisements, news novels, TV series, and movies. It is a tool that media researchers use to understand the meaning found within media texts. Through textual analysis, the research focuses primarily on representations of people of color's lives as sites of ideological conflict and interpretive negotiation. It examines how the company producing the commercial is used for marketing its brand and improving its image among recipients.

According to Bainbridge et al. (2011), films provide us with images that we can use to analyze that they all consist of the sign, which is the physical or auditory part. The signified is the mental part that we associate with this physical part. Norman Denzin (1995) suggests that the visual form is the predominant way of knowing, yet visual representations can only be understood and analyzed as textual constructs (Denzin, 1995). Rose (2012) argues that "*an image can be understood as a kind of discourse as well, as the way something is visually presented can make certain things more visible than others or represent something in a particular way*" (p. 191).

In the cinema, according to Bignel (1997), "*the gestural codes and the bodily and facial expressions of actors in silent films belonged to conventions which connoted realism when they were made and watched*" (p. 193). Hence, the researcher's job is to provide a deep understanding of the visual representations used in the commercial and to provide the reader with an analytical view of images of black people.

According to the previous literature presented in this paper, and having reviewed the literature on commercial campaigns to contribute to the abolition of racism against African Americans, the researcher found a shortage of research that studies the impact of visual commercial campaigns in terms of reducing racism, whether through sound effects, images, etc. Through analyzing *The Look* commercial, the researcher seeks to analyze how visual commercials can contribute to reducing discrimination against African Americans within American society and how Procter & Gamble Company uses the issue of discrimination against black people to enhance and improve its brand.

Analysis

The current section analyzes the images and words used in the commercial. Through the process of analysis, two main themes emerge: Denotation and Connotation Meanings and Commercializing racism. The first theme relates to the first question of the study, while the second theme relates to the second question of the study.

Denotation and Connotation Meanings

Procter & Gamble Company starts the commercial with a high-angle shot of a black man while he is sleeping. The soundtrack begins when he opens his eyes and gets up from the bed. The second scene shows the black man with his child in the street while they are kidding each other and laughing. A white woman with a fancy car appears with her girl, who sits in the back

seat. The child waves to greet the girl. The woman rolls up the car's windows when she sees the man and his boy. Then the man wants to catch the elevator. The man raises his hand to ask a group of white people to wait for him. The people ignore him and close the door. The next scene shows the man sitting in the restaurant having a meal. A white man and a white girl enter the restaurant. They avoid sitting near him. Then two white boys appear.

One is getting out of the pool, and the other wants to get in. The man enters a boutique shop. A white seller looks at the manager. The manager greets the black man. The six scenes are replayed. Other than music, the only voice in the commercial is a voice of a white officer who opens a court hall and says to the people in the hall, all rise! The camera pans left. The black man appears wearing a judge's robe and holding files. The man sits and looks at the camera and smiles. A sentence appears on a white background for a few seconds: let us talk about the look so we can see beyond it.

At the denotative level, the commercial shows the main character with a severe face as an establishing shot that establishes a serious basis for the commercial's theme (connotation level). The camera points at the main character (denotation level) in a high-angle shot. At the connotation level, it creates a feeling of inferiority regarding black people. The shot also elicits emotional reactions from the viewer that the character is in danger. In this context, Mannoni (1990) points out that "*in practice, therefore, an inferiority complex connected with the color of the skin is found only among those who form a minority within a group of another color*" (p. 39)

The main character's clothes are shown in dark colors throughout the commercial, as an indication of the modest social living status of black people in American society, and as opposed to the economically prosperous social condition portrayed in the commercial through the woman who owns a luxury car. Such Images are presented and repeated as if they summarize the black reality of life in this community. In this scene, blacks are stereotyped as being inferior to whites. Another indication is when the man walks with his son on foot. Such shots denote an economic superiority followed by the social superiority of whites compared to black people. The main character appears in cheap clothes, while people's clothes in the elevator are luxurious and expensive. At the connotation level, the commercial depicts the personal and institutional discrimination in a society that placed black people in a precarious economic situation. The main character is in the restaurant for a meal when all the customers are black. Black people avoid restaurants due to the racism they face. White people avoid sitting near black people as it is not pleasant to be near them about the hostility between white and black people.

The main character appears alone and without people close to him in the pool, indicating the isolation of black people in the entertainment areas. Everyone in the place is white. A boy is getting out of the pool and signals the other boy not to go into the pool as a sign that something is not normal. While the main character enters the clothing store, the service provider looks at the manager, inquiring about what can be done about the black customer. The manager welcomes the black man discreetly. The manager shows an unwillingness to receive the black customer. The commercial relies on natural light to create a sense of authenticity. The commercial is silently presented to the audience except for one statement released shortly before the end. The phrase ALL RISE! is spoken by a white officer who opens the door of the courtroom and orders the audience to stand up in respect to the black man. Such images would stimulate the viewer to see that black people deserve to be respected by white people. A mix of black and white audiences appearing in the courtroom is a sign of overcoming racism and

cohesion. At the end of the commercial, a sentence appears on a white background that says, “*let’s talk about the look so we can see beyond it.*”

Through this concluding sentence, the commercial addresses the audience and urges them to talk beyond judging black people based on their appearance and look beyond their color, which is the essence. At the same time, the commercial urges the audience to talk about The Look, that is, the name of the commercial, in order to market its brand.

The camera turns to the left in slow motion with motivational music shocking the viewer with the presence of the black man and the fact that he is a judge as a sign that refers to fairness, equality, and justice, leaving the viewer in a shock of the stereotype through which they judge black people by their appearance. Through the series of scenes, the commercial is a historical review of the most prominent situations black people in American society are exposed to and continue to suffer from.

Commercializing Racism

Some news sites described the commercial as relying on the creativity present in 2019. Procter & Gamble Company teamed with Saturday Morning Company to produce the commercial. Procter and Gamble Chief Brand Officer Marc Pritchard said: when we embrace creativity through humanity, we can change the world through our voices as a force for good. Geoff Edwards, a co-founder of Saturday Morning, said: that the film’s goal is to get people to have a conversation and acknowledge the existence of unconscious bias. It is a call to action for dialogue (Diaz, 2019).

Hall posited three locations where media messages could be decoded: preferred reading (dominant) position, negotiated position, and oppositional position (Hall, 1980). The Look commercial that Procter and Gamble produced depicts the daily life of a black person, from waking up and taking a son to school, to going to work, to having a meal at the restaurant, to going to entertainment venues. The commercial succeeded in arousing emotions in the audience. People on social media interacted with the commercial, and headlines of news websites hailed it. Stein (2020) said that The Look is a vital step forward in the conversation. This discussion falls within Hall’s first location of preferred readings. Hall argues that audiences tend to adopt the dominant view of the media discourse they receive, receiving the media message with the code it was produced in without thinking. Procter and Gamble designed the commercial to stir emotions towards black people and encourage social justice without viewers being aware.

Commercials driven by ideology are inevitable. Advertising enables brands to acquire cultural meanings, where the brand matters, not the goods (Al-Omar, 2020). The company designed the commercial in high quality. It used artistic techniques such as slow motion and music to capture the audience’s attention and arouse their feelings and interest till the final moment of the commercial at which the company’s branding appears. Procter & Gamble spends millions of dollars annually advertising its products.

The company that sells healthcare, home care, and child and family care products has used the social tragedy to promote its brand. In 2019, the company reduced its advertising spending by \$350 million for the third year. A Procter and Gamble spokesperson said that the company had increased its reach despite the decrease in advertising spending. The investment can be reinvested to reach more people. That is thanks to the company’s work over the past years

to rebuild the brand. The company's CEO, David Taylor, said, We have broad demographic groups that we target with our media (Spanier, 2019).

Hall (1980) argues that the audience takes a negotiated position at the second location on the media message. The audience interprets the message as "*a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements*" (p. 137). Recipients conduct negotiated readings of media messages and filter messages according to their experiences and personal insights. Taillard (2000) argues that the audience can be persuaded by secretly displaying the information so that the media intent is not shown, and the matter is left for the audience to capture the information. The company shows itself as a dove of peace that seeks justice. The company takes the issue of racism as a theme and a tool to promote its brand. It uses its trademark at the end of the commercial to remain in the audience's memory when purchasing.

The audience tends to take on an oppositional position if it finds an ideology within the media message. Hall explains that audiences may receive the message in a contrary way and adopt an oppositional ideological position against the message (Hall, 1980). Some questioned Procter and Gamble's true motives and said the campaign was racist and called for a boycott of the company's products. Previously, in 2017, the company launched a commercial about racism against black people. The commercial depicts conversations that black parents have made with their children over the decades about various racial situations (Nedra, 2017). In the oppositional reading of the commercial, black people are not as isolated as they were portrayed. However, this reading makes it possible to see the value meanings within the commercial. The ideology implied in the declaration is unlikely.

DISCUSSION

Two main themes emerge during the analysis. The discussion process addresses the meanings within the commercial. The first theme discusses the dictionary meanings (denotation) and the implicit meanings (connotation) of the scenes used in the commercial. Under this theme, the findings indicate that the commercial depicts a sense of imperfection for black people in American society. This finding can be explained by the commercial trying to arouse the audience's emotions toward black people. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon indicates that color-related racism will ultimately lead to an inferiority complex in black people who cannot change the discriminatory status quo. The commercial also depicts the economic status of black people as being within the poor or middle class at a maximum. Many scenes depict the economic and social superiority of white people compared to black people. Such portrayals may entrench the stereotype of white supremacy (Mirmasoomi & Roshnavand, 2014). Thackara (1979) points out, "*Blacks, above all, are portrayed as different. Usually reported in a negative context, as an aspect of a supposedly collective problem, blacks seldom get the opportunity to express their own point of view-in other words*" (p. 109).

Allen (1995) agrees with that by arguing that there are abundant references in the literature to black people's lower class and poverty culture. These references' repetition makes these concepts and myths more acceptable and believable. Van Dijk (2000) argues that the role of the media in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies is crucial. Few media plays a positive role in the fair promotion of these societies. Also, there are no similarly negative accounts of everyday discrimination and racism for the majority. Because most news, stories, topics, and quotes are systematically propagated against minorities, such media practices stimulate and confirm

widespread resentment against immigrants and minorities. From this perspective, it can be said that the media that systematically promote anti-racist messages and social justice can contribute to reversing this situation and raising awareness in racist societies.

The second theme deals with how the company that produced the commercial uses racism as a marketing tool for its brand. Through the analysis, it appears that the company used the social tragedy and the advantage of ethnic pluralism in American society as a new tactic in advertising. This manifests itself by showing the company itself as striving for peace and justice between white people and black people in American society. Through the issue of racism, the company creates a perception among consumers that its advertisements are socially responsible. The company wants to increase its reach to the most significant number of consumers. The debate about racism continues in American society, especially over the Internet and social media platforms. Thus, the company takes advantage of the possibility of inserting its trademark in this debate, which increases the frequency of its name among the users of these platforms and increases its commercial value. This claim is demonstrated by the company's recognition that it has achieved increased reach despite reducing the annual advertising cost of the products. In this context, Johnson (2009) argues that taking advantage of social responsibility in advertising to generate a commercial return is possible and that consumers' attitude is greatly influenced by the brand that uses social responsibility in their advertisements.

The commercial opens the door to discussing the racial hierarchy in America. Guess (2006) argues that there is little research on white people's role as a norm in maintaining social privilege compared to the role afforded to marginalized groups. I argue that Procter and Gamble Company produced The Look commercial with two main objectives: to enhance the credit of the company's brand image in the public's mind.

To achieve this goal, the company is trying, through commercials, to exploit social racism as a new advertising face towards the audience in an attempt to win consumers for its products. The company also tries to attach its brand with cultural meanings such as "*objectivity, neutrality, and fairness.*"

The second goal is to stimulate public debate about the historical dilemma in American society by arousing feelings toward black people and encouraging social justice. Procter & Gamble displays black people's social tragedy and triggers sympathy. Such commercials would open the door to further discussion of racial discrimination facing black people today and may indeed contribute to stifling racism towards minorities. This study argues that in the long term and with the accumulation of media messages, such commercials with anti-racist content can contribute to cultivating these anti-social perceptions of this social dilemma in the minds of audiences. Thus, the masses become rejecting racial discrimination and are more willing to accept other races and cultures.

Such findings agree with what Campbell (1995) concludes through analysis of the Clydesdale commercial that Anheuser-Busch aired after the September 11 attacks at three different levels. He points out that the commercials reflected the country's freedom and the unity of the American people. Also, he argues that advertising is the primary storyteller of US society. Commercials encouraged people to return to their consuming habits before September 11. Thus, advertising can go beyond its primary function of promoting products to a new function that holds societal value. This function can encourage the rejection of racial discrimination through anti-racism content-based strategies.

CONCLUSION

The research goal of this study was to examine race representation in commercials that depict discrimination against black people in America and to understand how Commercial companies use racism to improve their marketing profiles. The study suggests that such representation may help create an atmosphere of debate about social tragedy and raise awareness among the public regarding minorities within societies. Visual commercials effectively create public opinion within society and create new conversations about societal issues, which can eliminate negative phenomena in the long run. This study may contribute to establishing a theoretical foundation for the media to adopt educational advertising strategies to alleviate racism and other social dilemmas. Also, this study can add to the literature on critical theory and critical media studies. It can also be a practical guide for the media to take advantage of advertising strategies that aim to reduce racism and brand marketing. The main limitation of this study was that it covered one advertisement in the analysis, and future studies could address more than one commercial depicting racial prejudice. In addition, future studies may examine the effects of commercials that address the topic of racism on consumers' perceptions and how this commercial affects the brand's value among consumers, as well as investigate discrimination representations among other racial and cultural minorities.

APPENDIX I

The Look's Transcript

The film starts with a high-angle shot of a black man while he is sleeping. The soundtrack begins when he opens his eyes then he gets up from the bed.

The second scene shows the black man with his child in the street while they are kidding each other and laughing. A white woman with a fancy car appears with her girl who sets in the back seat. The child waves to greet the girl. The woman rolls up the car's windows when she sees the man and his boy.

The third scene shows the man wants to catch the elevator. The man raises his hand to ask a group of white people to wait for him. The people ignore him and close the door with hated looks at him.

In the fourth scene, the man sets in the restaurant having a meal. A white man and a white girl enter the restaurant.

They avoid sitting near him with hated looks at him.

The fifth scene shows two white boys one of them is getting out of the pool, and the other wants to get in. The one who is getting out the pool gestures the other one not to enter and looks at the man who is teaching his son to swim. In the sixth scene, the man enters a boutique shop. A white seller looks at the manager (Makharesh et al., 2022).

The manager greets the black man. The six scenes are replayed.

The seventh and last scene shows a white officer opens a court hall and says to the people in the hall, all rise! The camera pans left. The black man appears wearing a judge's robe and holding files. The man sits and looks at the camera and smiles.

A sentence that appears on a white background says: let's talk about the look so we can see beyond it.

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