

Social Manipulations in Advertising: Impact on Consumers' Perception of a Product

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Abstract. Manipulations in advertising are rarely regarded as a sociolinguistics factor of influence. Having found the disparate classification of impact on people's desire to buy products, we aim to provide a full description list of manipulation features in the field of advertisement. It presents deeper comprehension of marketing discourse of psychological impact and protects from spontaneous decisions those consumers who pretend to obtain each thing that was promoted. After regarding the theoretical specification of manipulations in printed and video advertising and its general usage by involving the buyer in the trading process, we identify the most common classification of ways to influence the consumer including peculiarities of verbal and written utterance. These designations became the theoretical basis for analysis of advertisements while questioner was devoted to find out social awareness of Russians about marketing impact and its ways of resistance. Hence, we propose the description of the most used varieties of manipulations in advertising both in the domestic and foreign markets with an extensive analysis of examples of such promotions and with the assumption that it is necessary to develop ways to counter such manipulations.

Keywords: manipulation; advertisement; consumers; brand; market; impact

1 Introduction

There is a growing mainstream among different marketers and organizations to use a multitude of manipulations in their advertisements. A large number of studies reveal that various manipulations impact on consumer's perception of the product significantly. Complementing these investigations of manipulation's influence is research that examines the types of manipulations and their process. It is paramount to observe that the vast majority of manipulative advertisements are tough not only to recognise but also to prove their existence as their nature and content is controversial.

Many studies have been conducted on the topic of manipulation in advertising, but none of them gave a complete overview of the reasons for the use of manipulation and did not also give a complete qualification. Some of them have demonstrated that whenever these advertising efforts are focused on getting the consumers to do what the advertiser wants through subversive manners that lack the truth. It can be said that manipulation exists there. If the manipulator takes up the case, then a variety of falsification of facts about the product takes place in many cases (Danciu, 2014).

This research supposes a double objective, which includes examining how marketers and multiple organizations get consumers' heads to buy their production, despite their quality, price, effectiveness, and usefulness. In this case, the analysis of three types of advertisement will demonstrate manipulative tricks where its marketers are in vogue in recent time. The second intention is to examine Russian people's awareness of how they can be manipulated through viewing commercial of various types. This investigation

brings to a certain conclusion that could be interpreted as positive or negative depending on the obtained results.

The whole study can become an important implication for several stakeholder groups. First, our findings may help to recognise manipulation tricks in advertising and will teach not to yield to its influence. Hence, our results may be of use to individuals by enabling them to comprehend the ways and the processes of manipulation. Finally, such knowledge may help not only younger but also older generations — individuals who are mostly and easily susceptible to leverage — always to be on the alert.

2 Manipulation's Usage in Advertising

Nepriahin (2018) in his book identified manipulation as a people's desire to control others. This kind of obsession becomes a result of various psycho-diseases when a person manipulates for life, lives for manipulation. However, this definition cannot be used for the field of advertising as a whole, although it is crucial to notice here that the main reason for manipulation in advertising comes from the purpose to manage people's minds and involve them in a certain domain of the market. Low involvement is the main reason for the PR and marketing department to include psychological aspects for the purpose to engage the audience. Laczniak and Mueheling (2013) distinguished two stages of manipulation production, naming them as peripheral and central manipulation. Where the first term describes the quality of colour, background and primary characteristics provided on non-brand processing, whereas the second statement is devoted to the stage when a brand chooses more specific characteristics for the advertising and complement the peripheral manipulation. Nevertheless, it often happens that excessive use of manipulation leads to advertising that is not directly related to the product. It negates most types of manipulation, causing rejection of the product from customers. This phenomenon is explained by the occurrence of logical errors, which in turn are a clear example of the advertiser's incompetence.

Thus, the brand must carefully choose the advertising company. Moreover, it was noted that the same products of competing brands are not the subject of advertising production by the same company (Kent & Allen, 1994). Besides, different levels of brand fame are also one of the reasons for choosing an advertiser carefully. This is since low although the involvement in such situations, the less the brand and its product are known in the market, the more difficult it will be to choose the types of manipulation since the target audience will be more biased than if the brand has its influence in the market. In this way, the right usage of manipulation must include the awareness of brand manager that in many cases all that was shown in advertising remains on the periphery of consciousness and is not transmitted to the main memory of a person. Hence, four levels of ad perception were highlighted for a clear picture of how to attract the audience's attention (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984). There is preattention when a person watches peripheral manipulation of colour, music, etc. Focal attention is considered that a person pays more attention to a product then comes comprehension of a brand and elaboration which becomes the main reason of desire to get a product. Thus, we can conclude that to successfully use manipulation in advertising it is necessary to know its classification and application in a particular case.

3 Classification of Manipulations in Advertising

Referring to a well-known fact, there are types of advertising that have different conceptual components. However, any kind of manipulation can be applied in one way or another to any of them. Thus, the issue

of classification becomes one of the most important and complex. This is since few scientists and analysts have tried to create a complete list of manipulations that advertisers use in their work.

Melnichuk and Klimova (2019) identified 6 types of manipulations that are more often used in brand newsletters. The first is 'Substitution of the beneficiary' which implies the omission of facts about the quality of a product or service and includes such phrases as 'benefit', 'advice', 'help', 'easy', 'two for the price of three', as well as semantic negotiation 'not only...but also'. 'Insistent invitation' is used to avoid contacting a specific person. Thus, the brand uses the imperative to appeal to everyone and no one at the same time, encouraging the audience to take action. 'Sociocultural significance' is used to emphasise the importance of the buyer, while the manipulation strategy 'global brand' applies to the product's position in the global market. It is usually implied such expressions as 'geographic position', 'worldwide', 'global market'.

The other type that is closely related to the previous two terms is called the 'growth indicator' and informs customers about what the company has achieved or is going to achieve by offering its products. Besides, this manipulation technique can be supplemented by 'witness testimonies' which are citations of famous people or workers of a company.

'Modelling a community of like-minded people' is the final term of given classification which uses generalizations of the audience and the certain brand throughout such words as 'we', 'ours', and foreign borrowings for showing people that they are a part of a big community.

Speaking about video advertising, Victor Danciu offered several effective types of manipulations (2014). It is impossible to face them separately but necessary to identify them. The first is deceitful advertising which is used to confuse the audience by shuffling the facts and providing a more profitable slogan formulation for the brand. This type of manipulation is often used together with a bad argument that has nothing to do with the brand or its products. Moreover, addressing the emotional background of customers is the third component of successful manipulation. Moreover, this can be either a well-staged speech of the actor or a peripheral manipulation, which, as it was said earlier, includes the background, music, and colour.

The manipulation of the size and the price of the product is another good technique (Li et al., 2019) that is always provided by advertisers who want to increase customers' involvement especially if the brand introduces a new product to the market. First, they advertise the product using all the previously listed classifications, and then the brand announces discounts, often increasing the original cost and leaving the old price as a favourable offer.

Therefore, there are many different manipulations, and we have reviewed the more widely used varieties for a clearer understanding of how the advertising manipulation system works.

4 Advertisement Analysis

Three types of advertising were taken for a complete analysis of manipulations. It is worth noting that these varieties are the most common in the market of increasing customers' engagement. Furthermore, it is possible to observe their different form, but the principle of their creation remains similar to those that will be analysed below. It is paramount to observe that the analysis of advertisements can give individuals an opportunity not only to comprehend the manipulations better but also to escape its impact on product perception.

The first type of advertising can be identified as an e-mail newsletter for registered clients of shops, magazines or banks. For the analysis for this study were taken written advertisement of Russian VTB bank.

In spite of the fact that the text of the advertisement was written in Russian, the sense in translated form will be transferred in a quite clear way.

This advertisement aimed to attract new investors in bonds of VTB bank. Importantly, the salutation was personalised. In many other cases it could be possible to regard the impersonal treatment as an introduction to something global or ‘insistent invitation’. Nevertheless, the last type of manipulation is present in the selected text and will be reviewed later. Now, it is important to highlight another type of control consumers’ engagement which is ‘modelling a community of like-minded people’. The expressions ‘we will tell’, ‘our analytics’, ‘our subscribers’ show how a potential novice investor can become a significant part of the VTB community.

Thus, coming back to ‘insistent invitation’ we can observe such imperatives as ‘download our app’, and ‘keep abreast of developments’ which manipulates the desire to be more informed and getting more opportunities than it was before. The VTB bank client is driven by the desire to become more secure begins to invest in the bank's bonds in which the following manipulation of ‘price and size occurs’. In this case, it is mostly the size of provided percentage. Bank promoters attached structured data where it is easy to understand the benefits of the offer and memorised it:

- Coupon income – 4,7 % annually (which is a good percentage for Russian’s investors)
- Frequency of payments – two times per year
- Period – a year
- Nominal price of one bond – 1000 rubles.

The second type of advertisement that was chosen for analysis is a modern realm of phone games promoting. It supposes people’s engagement in a process of video advertising itself. The advertiser does not leave any possibility to stop watching the video until the potential client completes a certain set of actions.

The game ‘Project Makeover’ can become a good example of such a subtype of video advertising. This game video promotion was chosen for a reason that people who do not understand the types of manipulation can reveal the influence on their desires. Developers manipulate them overly obvious that is a positive aspect of this advertising in the context of our research and provides an opportunity to show how the advertisers use manipulations.

Firstly, it is necessary to note the peripheral manipulation with animation of characters and music. A person can observe avatars of the main characters. The same can be said about the background. The advertiser provides the main storyline of the game where the plot revolves around a girl. Promotions allow choosing her future actions thereby manipulating the viewer and forcing him to play. It is worth noting that this type of advertising does not have the usual slogans. A person can only observe the names of the actions proposed by the developers and be sure that they are given a choice. Nevertheless, this is a prime example of a new subtype of manipulation, which we called ‘imaginary free choice’. Since no matter what set of actions a person chooses, the result will always be the same. The user will be taken to the game page in the App Store or Google Play.

Finally, the third type of advertising is the most common and popular among a certain number of companies. It is video promotions on YouTube and Instagram platform or TV channels. It is worth noting that in such videos, it is necessary to pay a lot of attention not only to such types of manipulation as price and size, which may not be present in advertising but also to peripheral processing. Thus, we have chosen

famous parfum advertising by Lancôme. Namely, it is Lancôme Idol of 2019 with Hollywood actress Zendaya.

It is necessary to observe that the music that has been used is contemporary (Sia's 'Unstoppable'). In this connection, the singer and the song that have been chosen are of great importance and popularity, especially among the younger generation. The words of the song have a huge positive socio-cultural significance. Nevertheless, they become a good way for manipulating customers' minds against the backdrop of this promotion. The words 'unstoppable' and 'invincible' push people to some specific actions. It creates a realm of perception in which they believe that that they listen to themselves, and not someone's imposed opinion. A harmonious colour scheme selected for the background action strengthens the words presented in the ad. We should not exclude the fact that the main character, presented in a beautiful light dress on a white horse, embodies freedom, strength, and a sense of self sufficiency. This central element most influences the perception of the product. In this case, the potential customer will pay attention not to the real quality of the product (in this case, it is the durability and taste of the smell) but to the socio-cultural element embedded in the advertising itself. Hence, we observe two types of manipulation: 'sociocultural significance and deceitful advertising'.

4 Survey Results

The survey was made to see the level of awareness of manipulations used to promote and sell a product. 107 Russian citizens aged 18-24 were asked 10 questions about their experience with manipulation in the advertisement.

Some results were expected (respondents have a superficial knowledge of the topic and are not aware of ways to resist manipulation) and some were unexpected (respondents are aware of being manipulated and can point out some techniques if a list of them was provided).

It is worth noticing that the vast majority of respondents are women (Figure 1), which confirmed a greater interest in buying a particular product through watching advertisement. This happened because advertising captured the attention of the buyer, suppressing his critical thinking, and the purchase was made only through advertising (Figure 2).

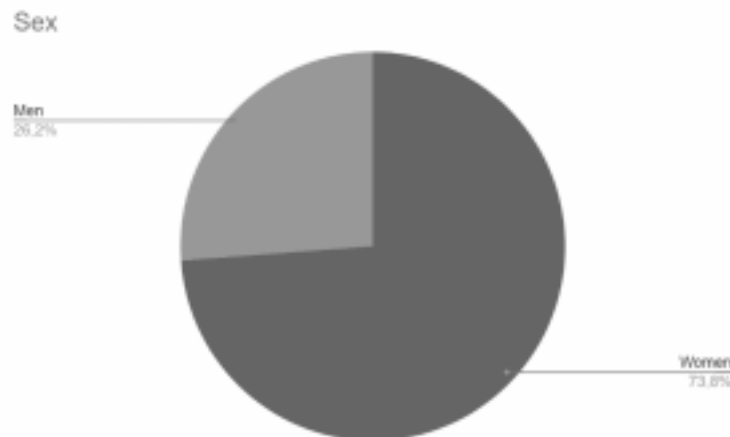


Figure 1: *The ratio of female and male respondents.*

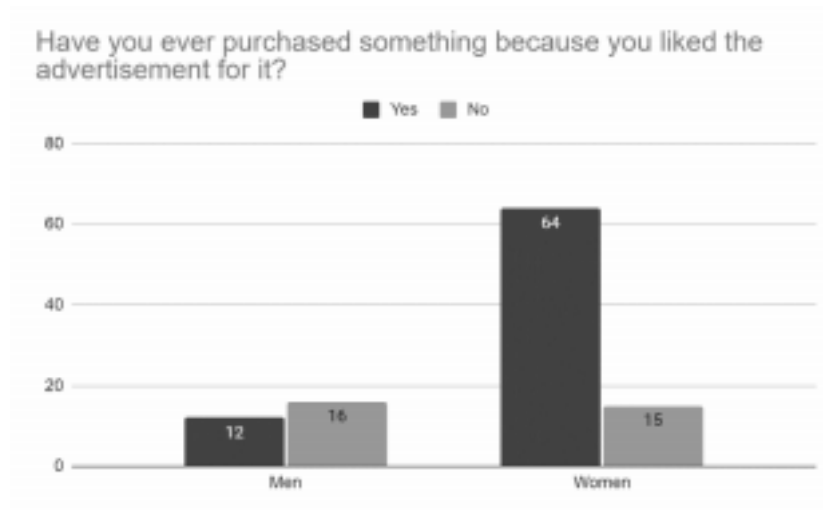


Figure 2: *The ratio of men and women realising attractiveness of an advertisement for future purchase.*

Thus, when asked whether the respondents were aware that they were being manipulated through advertising, the majority answered positively. They mentioned emotional and psychological pressure and sales as the reasons that made them buy the product. However, almost half of respondents did not know what manipulation techniques were used, although it was a manipulation.

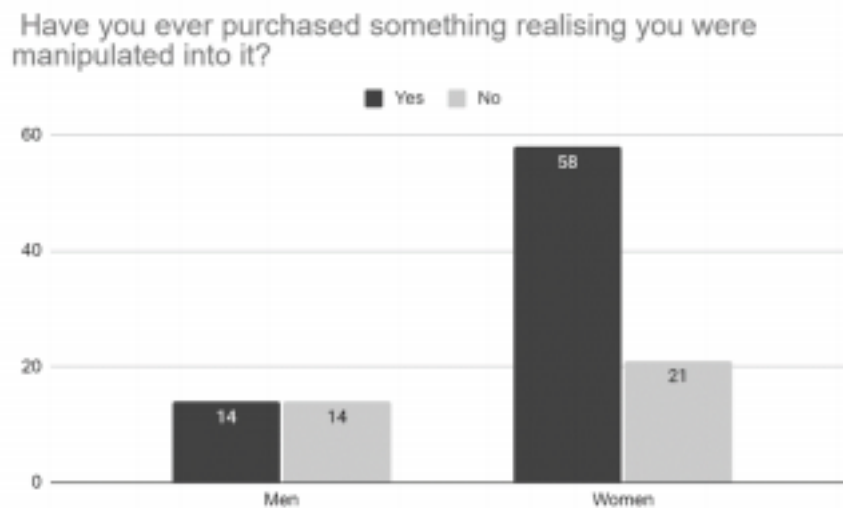


Figure 3: *The awareness of respondents being manipulated by advertisement.*

It is seen from the answers that respondents can spot manipulation if paying attention, but they lack structural knowledge of manipulation techniques and ways to resist it (Figure 4). Those few who answered positively could not give an exact answer, what can be opposed against manipulation. Simple ignoring was suggested most often.

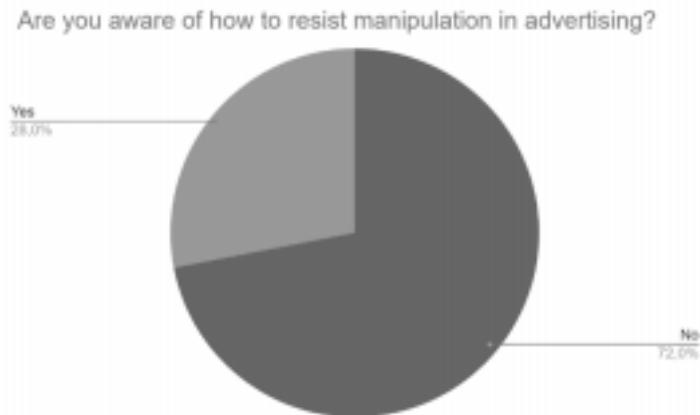


Figure 4: *The awareness of respondents of how to resist manipulations in advertisement.*

During the survey, respondents were asked to view the selected ads and tell us what types of manipulation were used in them. Figure 5 shows the variable responses to the advertisement from Lâncome. Global brand in advertising is a major point that people could indicate. Nevertheless, such a criterion is erroneous, due to ignorance about the details of the division into types of manipulations in advertising. This cannot be said of the following frequently chosen type. Sociocultural significance represents 20% of the total number of responses collected while the other right identified factor comprises less than 10%.

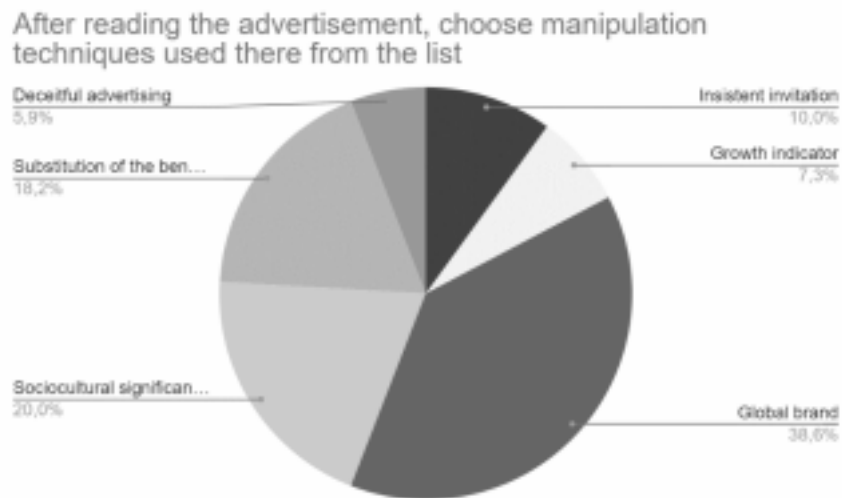


Figure 5: *Chosen types of manipulation in advertisement of Lâncome.*

It was necessary to confirm initial assumptions about respondents' awareness of manipulation techniques in any types of promotion. Therefore, we provide the extra question, where asked to make a brief analysis of the VTB bank e-mail advertisement (Figure 6). The results again confirmed the superficiality of the respondents' knowledge. Percentage of 'growth indicator' and 'price and size' appears almost the same

although one of criterion shouldn't have been marked intensely. This tiny difference between the two types of manipulations forces participants to pay more attention to numbers and superficially read the other points that were demonstrated in the e-mail. Thus, the point of 'modelling a community of like-minded people' was dismissed in many cases. People have not seen any references for choosing this variant although they were apparent.

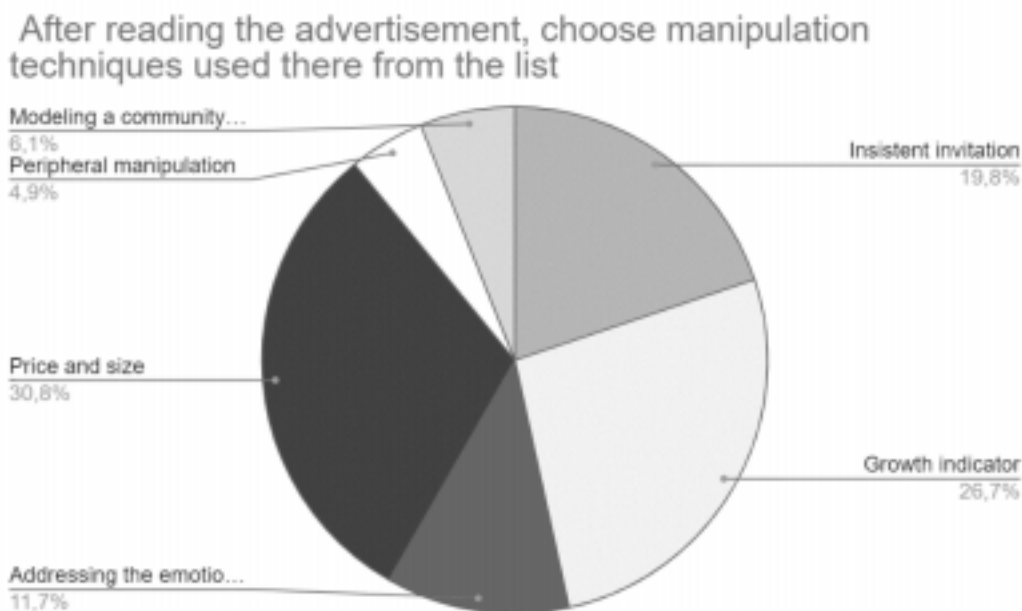


Figure 6: Chosen types of manipulations by VTB in advertisement.

Hence, despite the fact that the results were expected they have brought more structural information that consequently allowed to come to certain conclusions.

5 Conclusion

Social manipulation in advertising has an unambiguous intention to control people's desires and needs. However, it is impossible to name one approach that would be known to everyone. Manipulation is multi-faceted. This has a double meaning. Hidden or peripheral approaches can weaken mindfulness, while overlaid features become a call to action. Hiding the facts about the product or giving the opportunity to feel important distorts the real characteristics of the product. They allow seeing what the consumer need. This is the main reason why it was necessary to identify the main types of manipulations.

The analysis demonstrates that it is necessary to pay great attention to the wording, especially where the pronoun We is present. It makes clear to the buyer that they are not alone and is universal in the use of utterances in all types of advertising. In addition, where the pronoun We is present, it is possible to find the imperative mood, which encourages to be engaged. Nevertheless, when identifying manipulations in advertising, it is essential to pay attention not only to the linguistic component but also to the music and

background. In this case, socio-cultural significance can be laid down in the basis, for example, contained in the words of a song.

These and many other techniques for intentionally involving consumers in the shopping process led to the need for simultaneous viewing of advertising. The survey showed unambiguous results. Russian young people know about manipulations superficially, which forces them to realise that the perception when buying a product was violated through external influence. Moreover, it is not worth saying that the respondents would be able to identify specific phrases from the context of advertising if they were not provided with a list.

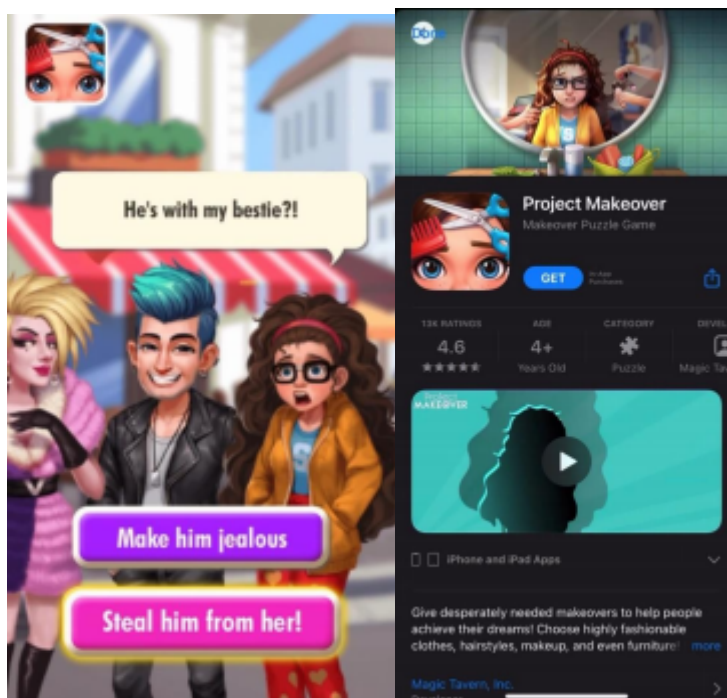
These facts lead to the need to study the types of social manipulation in advertising that were presented in this study by Russian citizens. Hence, it provides a perspective for further research, in particular, for the development of counteraction methods that could reduce the level of exposure while viewing ads.

6 References

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix One: 'Project Makeover' – Screens of Video Advertising



7.2 Appendix Two: The VTB bank e-mail (translation)

Bonds are a great tool for a novice investor. In this letter, we will tell you how you can make money by buying VTB bonds.

Projected income and low risk

1. Twice during the term, you receive a coupon (interest) income.
2. At the end of the term, you will be refunded the entire amount invested.
3. You can return the money at any time without losing the coupon income.

The return occurs through the sale of the bond at the market price, which may differ from the purchase price.

What VTB bonds are available now

- Coupon income – 4,7 % annually
- Frequency of payments – two times per year
- Period – a year
- Nominal price of one bond – 1000 rubles

7.3 Appendix Three: Buy Bonds: Install the App

"VTB My Investments" to:

- get a selection of the best securities – our analysts regularly manually select the best securities and give their recommendations.
- invest with the help of a robot adviser-it will select a personal portfolio for free and will send you tips on how to manage it.

- change the currency without leaving your home. Exchange at the exchange rate-from 1 USD;
- study analytics from VTB Capital Investment Bank, use a virtual assistant and have access to 10,000 securities on 33 exchanges