Brittany O'Malley's Acceptance to ECA 2020

by Scarlett Sperduto

This year, senior Brittany O'Malley was accepted to present at the Eastern Communication Association's James C. McCroskey and Virginia P. Richmond Undergraduate Scholars Conference.

O'Malley is a senior Communication student with a major in Advertising and a minor in Digital Media Art. After completing her research in COMM 409: Senior Seminar, she submitted her paper to ECA's undergraduate scholar's conference, and was accepted to present at the conference in Baltimore in April. Unfortunately, the conference had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her paper titled, '#AerieReal and The New Wave of Branding,' O'Malley discussed how the #AerieReal campaign created a path for more diverse and inclusive fashion advertising. She compared Aerie to Victoria's Secret, and found that after the launch of this campaign, Aerie's success skyrocketed, and Victoria's Secret declined.

O'Malley used semiotic analysis to closely examine Instagram posts of both brands for a month, and found that Aerie was successful in their advertising in areas such as using diverse and inclusive models, candid and relatable shoot locations, no retouching, and genuine representation of the models. Victoria's Secret, by comparison, was not successful in these areas. Her research stressed how important it is for the fashion industry to know the potential harm it can bring to audiences, but also how helpful and influential advertising in the fashion industry can be.

It is very unfortunate that Brittany missed her chance to present her research at the ECA this April, but her competitive acceptance to one of the premier eastern regional communication conferences is still a noteworthy and admirable accomplishment.