
Gillian Stevens, University of Alberta, Canada

The “I am Canadian” campaign for Molson's Canadian beer, first aired in 2000, became an overnight phenomenon. This campaign's success rode (and helped produce the crest of) a wave of nationalistic identity that can be traced through self-reports of race and ethnic origins in Canadian censuses from 1981 through 2006.

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Socio-Historical Change and Representations of Consumers in Ads
Chair: Melanie Wallendorf, Eller College of Management, USA

Paper #1: Making the Changing Scene
Sidney J. Levy, University of Arizona, and Marketing
Department, Northwestern University (emeritus), USA

Erika Paulson, University of Wisconsin, USA
Thomas O’Guinn, University of Wisconsin, USA

Gillian Stevens, University of Alberta, Canada

Paper #4: An Historical Analysis of Archetypical Shifts in Representations of Women in Luxury Product Advertising in the early 1960’s
Alyssa Travis, University of Arizona, USA
Melanie Wallendorf, University of Arizona, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW

Session objective
To bring together diverse yet similar papers examining change in advertising depictions over time employing a cultural lens to address the relation between socio-cultural change and advertising representations of various social categories of consumers.

General orientation
The session’s orientation is socio-cultural rather than psychological and covers broad temporal change in representations of social categories in advertising.

Likely audience
The likely audience is consumer researchers with an interest in advertising and its relation to larger society. It will also draw CCT scholars and consumer researchers with social science interests outside psychology, particularly those with interests in historical analysis, sociological interpretation, and anthropological approaches. It will attract those with an interest in social class, gender, and ethnicity. And, given the focus of the Stephens paper, we anticipate that it will attract many Canadians at the conference.

Issues and topics to be covered
Advertising, cultural change, historical analysis, gender, race, class, immigration, and inequality.

Importance of contribution to CB
On average, biology grants us the opportunity to understand a time span of 78.49 years (81.48 years for Canadians) through direct experience. Historical analysis expands our range of understanding beyond that granted by biology, and deepens our understanding beyond what can be directly experienced.

The conference mission of appreciating diversity in approaches
The topics covered that are often not covered in ACR presentations are gender as a social category, social inequality, relations between immigrants and host culture, international relations through advertising, and most importantly, a broad historical perspective. The presenters include several first time ACR presenters, including an award winning senior scholar from sociology. The presentations draw from the perspectives of three different generations of consumer researchers, each of whom approaches these time periods in a different way.

Stage of completion
All projects are fully complete.

Making the Changing Scene

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
The basic goal of the presentation is to observe and analyze how advertising expresses a society’s values. The themes to be discussed are these: Society moves generally from mass consumption to making increasingly individual choices serving subgroup and personal choices. There is the large development that starts with the struggle to feed, clothe, and house masses of poor people. I term this obligatory marketing. This mass consumption is accompanied by relative scarcity, the central role of commodities, problems of distribution, an emphasis on economics, and pressure toward low prices as well as the importance of commodity companies, non-profit agencies, and government.

Movement toward economic success increases opportunities for the expression of subgroup lifestyles and personal distinction; that is, both to belong and to stand out. I term this permissive marketing. Individualized and niche consumption goes with branding, higher prices, and the creation of distinction for products through artistic means. A key artistic achievement is the creation of brand images. Brand images are created by all marketing means, but especially by advertising. Planning and executing advertising is a rich, complex, and challenging activity. To do it well requires awareness of cultural changes in values. Sometimes advertising leads the way with innovation and anticipation of where society is going. Commonly it follows where the people are going.

Three JIF Peanut Butter commercials from three historical periods are used as exemplars of advertising’s process of adaptation to changing values and roles in American life. The first commercial shows a traditional emphasis on being a good mother. It assumes the mother stays at home and takes care of the children. The second commercial includes two references to changing values and roles in American life. The first commercial shows where the people are going. The basic goal of the presentation is to observe and analyze how advertising expresses a society’s values. The themes to be discussed are these: Society moves generally from mass consumption to making increasingly individual choices serving subgroup and personal choices. There is the large development that starts with the struggle to feed, clothe, and house masses of poor people. I term this obligatory marketing. This mass consumption is accompanied by relative scarcity, the central role of commodities, problems of distribution, an emphasis on economics, and pressure toward low prices as well as the importance of commodity companies, non-profit agencies, and government.

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The ads are a subsample (n=213 for all general interest) of a larger data collection (n=1200) covering the period 1900 to 2010 and coded along multiple dimensions of stratification including age, race, gender, and social class by three trained coders (Krippendorff’s alpha = 0.78). We focus on the 1970-2010 period due to its sociological and economic significance. It is during this period that the U.S. exits a post-World War II period of increasing equality, equitable income growth and economic wellbeing. From the mid 1970s forward the U.S. experiences increasing inequality on virtually every dimension, rending the class divide ever wider. This reversal of fortunes that occurred in the 1970s is widely known to sociologists as the Great U-Turn (Harrison and Bluestone 1988). The presentation will overlay our content analysis with other empirical social indicators, such as measures of income inequality and public opinion. We will investigate whether this trend holds only in general interest advertising or whether the same class message is conveyed differently to consumers occupying different social classes. We will also identify, describe, and report the frequency and nature of one common visual trope within each of the social class representations. In each case we examine how the trope deftly leverages social stratifications to sell products, and presents a world consistent with advertising’s institutional goals.

The overwhelming majority of individuals who appear in general interest advertising are drawn from the middle class. The period begins in 1970 with 45.2 % of pictured individuals identified as middle class. They average 55.9% of the sub-sample. While this level over-represents the middle class compared to the 32% of the population that is objectively middle class, it is the astonishing growth of images of the middle class until 2000 that is particularly striking, at which point the middle class comprises 73.3 % of the individuals in our subsample. Advertising insists that the middle class is stable, secure, even growing. This trend becomes particularly interesting and counterintuitive when overlaid with popular press and public opinion data that suggest a significantly threatened, shrinking, or even disappearing middle class. The distance between advertising images and public perception is investigated along multiple dimensions: an artifact of the target market of mass advertising, a “safe” and desirable way to sell products, as part and parcel of the “egalitarian myth” that has been an ever present and defining theme in American politics (Pessen 1971), and the institutional environment in which a foreshortened class structure is present (Marchand 1985).

In examining the portrayal of the middle class in general circulation advertising, we go beyond numeric representations and investigate the common tropes or tableau in which the middle class is placed. We find that the middle class plays a unique role in advertising. The modal ad shows the middle class to be overworked and over-committed (Schor 1993). In this trope, which we label the “consumer drama,” a simple narrative unfolds. These narratives are unbalanced and dramatic; women scramble up on chairs when they see a mouse, fall off clumsy step stools, and are escorted off beaches by police officers. All tell a simple narrative in which something goes wrong and a branded consumer good or service is used to solve the problem. The function of this style of trope and its relationship to the stratification of society is suggested.

The end of this counter-empirical reality comes in 2010. Abruptly, representations of the middle class fall from 73.3% to 36.6% in just ten years. Why? We propose a number of possible hypotheses. We examine alternative social stratifications and hierarchies as well as popular opinion and populist sentiment as potential drivers of this shift. By 2010 income inequality had become common a common media meme, a mid-term election issue, and part of several left and right populist movements.

In accounting for the decline of the middle class in the final decennial year, 2010, we expand our analysis to the intersections of social class with race and ethnicity. The proportion of Blacks, Latinos, and other minority ethnic groups portrayed in ads averages a combined 8.0% from 1970 to 2000, never exceeding 20%. However, in 2010 the number of non-whites portrayed in general interest advertising crescentos to a remarkable 47.5% of all individuals. Not only is the increase sharp, 2010 represents the first year when racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented as compared to the actual population. We consider multiple causes of this dramatic shift including demographic shifts in the American populace, the powerful effect of Obama’s presidency, and the emergence of a “post-racial America.” Because class, race and ethnicity are often confounded, we also consider socioeconomic shifts such as the Great Recession. When these explanations are found lacking, we turn to the final crucial factor – the institutional environment. Our analysis reveals that the most compelling explanation for this shift is less about demography or ideology than the institutional environment. Many minorities pictured in 2010 appear in ads that emphasize a firm’s corporate social responsibility and charitable activities across the world including China, India, and Africa.

A large body of empirical work has consistently shown that media representations significantly impact people’s beliefs about the composition of the social world (Gerbner et al. 2002). Our world is increasingly mediated by social representations brought by advertising supported television, paid search, and entertainment. Advertising is the most explicit in its purpose: to get consumers to want and buy things. Yet, social class, inextricably tied to consumption, has remained largely unexamined. As theorists have argued, the information in ads is never random (Schudson 1984; Goffman 1976) or mundane, but rather goes well beyond copy and product demonstration to comment on the fabric of social life. Our investigation of class and stratification images reveals crucial processes of social representation and the interplay of forces such as institutions that have not been apparent in previous research.

REFERENCES


EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The “I am Canadian” commercial for Molson’s Canadian beer, first aired in 2000, became an overnight phenomenon in Canada. In “The Rant,” as it was known, an actor listed stereotypical characteristics of Canadians and ended with the emphatic declaration “I am Canadian.” This ad was interpreted by many as an expression of national pride and an emblem of Canadian patriotism (Macgregor, 2003); its success quickly led to numerous spin-offs and spoofs, and increased beer sales for Molson’s Beer Co. The campaign was perfectly timed: it occurred after two decades of change in how Canadians identified themselves. In 1981, less than 1% of the Canadian population identified their origins on the federal census as “Canadian” or “Canadien”. By 2001, the number describing their origins as at least partly Canadian or Canadien had grown to 40%.

The rapid growth of the numbers and percentages of people in Canada identifying themselves as Canadian in response to the census questions on race and ethnic “origins” between 1981 and 2006 is the result of several different sets of processes. The first set consists of demographic processes: immigration, racial and ethnic intermarriage, and generational aging. Immigrant origins such as “Ukrainian” or “Italian” fade in salience by the third and later generations. As intermarriage between origin or ancestry groups increases, the complexity of origins of the next generation increases and the salience of any one ancestral thread decreases.

A second set of processes consists of methodological issues that helped shaped the conversation between the premier data-gathering organization of the country, Statistics Canada, and the nation’s population. Details of the operationalization and design of the questions and the responses for racial and ethnic “origins” in the censuses, first discouraged, then allowed, then reacted to, and finally encouraged people to declare that their racial or ethnic origins were “Canadian” or “Canadien” or included a Canadian component. In this regard, both Statistics Canada and the respondents to the censuses worked in concert to produce an upswing in the numbers of people declaring themselves, at least in part, as Canadian.

A third set of issues concern the ambiguity and complexity of the concepts—nationality, race, ethnicity—that underlay ancestral origins and the phenomena that shape people’s choice of a particular discourse describing their origins. Because these concepts are complex and overlapping, contemporaneous and extraneous phenomena such as advertising campaigns for beer or a clothing chain can bring a specific discourse to the forefront at a time when respondents must confront the need to choose a particular answer on a federal form.

Scholars have argued that the tenor of Canadian nationalism changed in the mid-1980s. During the 1980s and 1990s, several commercial enterprises became important actors in the expression of Canadian patriotism. These included Roots, a Canadian clothing store, Tim Hortons’ chain of coffee and donut shops, as well as Molson’s beer company. The proclivity of Canadians to drape themselves in clothing branded with beavers, canoes and maple leaves, and to drink coffee in shops associated with a hockey player, blossomed during these two decades. Carstairs (2006) argues that these consumer purchases allowed Canadians the ability to be “proudly Canadian” while imagining an idealized life of wilderness parks and successful athletes. The success of Molson’s nationalistic and forceful “I am Canadian” campaign, which was particularly evident at the very beginning of the 21st century, may well have helped produce the crest in the numbers of individuals who chose to opt for the response most evocative of a nationalistic stance in the 2001 census.

fielded only a year after the beginning of the campaign. It is also possible that the Canadian Government’s extensive advertisements for the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan (Rose, 2003) fueled nationalistic responses on the 2001 census.

However, five years later, in 2006, the year of the next census, the percentage of respondents declaring themselves as Canadian/Canadien dropped back slightly to 35%. But by then the novelty and prominence of Molson’s very forceful campaign had faded and so the other options, discourses centered on race or ethnic origins, may have moved back into the forefront for some individuals as they confronted the need to choose one or two words to describe their origins on the federal census form.

REFERENCES


An Historical Analysis of Archetypical Shifts in Representations of Women in Luxury Product Advertising in the early 1960’s

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study zooms in on a particularly noteworthy moment in U.S. history to closely examine how socio-historical events reverberate in advertising representations of social categories of consumers. It follows the work of Marchand (1985) and others focused on advertising’s cultural meanings within a particular socio-historical context (Scott 1994; Stern 1989, 1996; O’Guinn, Pracejus, Olsen 2006). We examine the temporal relationship between political and social change and advertising representations of consumers. We began our research wanting to consider whether a single traumatic event in U.S. history could significantly alter advertising conventions for luxury products not directly connected to the event. That is, can changes in advertising representations of consumers be traced to distinct social disruptions, even in ads for luxury products that usually show little change over time?

Method. We examine a set of 800 magazine ads for women’s perfume and cologne appearing from 1962 – 1965, a period that brackets the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. In this presentation we examine changes in representations of women in these ads. Our data is a comprehensive set of such ads contained in the J. Walter Thompson Competitive Advertisements Collection at the Hartman Center at Duke University. Our data set provides broad inclusion of perfume and cologne advertisements found in a structured sample of major distribution magazines including Mademoiselle, The New Yorker, Harper’s Bazaar, Seventeen, Good Housekeeping, Ladies’ Home Journal, and Life.

Perfume and cologne advertisements were chosen because they often utilize abstract messages to sell the product. Like automobile, soft drink, and cigarette advertisements, perfume ads seek to associate the product with culturally framed aspirations such as success, romance, youthfulness, or adventure (Zelman 1992). However, un-
like automobiles, soft drinks, and cigarettes, there is no commonly understood vocabulary to fully express the particular compositional qualities of fragrance. Consequently, perfume and cologne advertisements rely on abstract symbolism to sell the product and to link a particular scent to elements of an American dream (Zelman 1992). Because perfume and cologne advertisements employ symbolism rather than information about functional product attributes, their advertising conventions are perhaps more flexible in their ability to change with shifts in cultural meanings.

The advertisements in the data set were coded on many exeptional dimensions, but in this presentation we focus on the representations of women in the ad. By closely examining the implied viewer, surroundings, eye contact, clothing, and social setting, women appearing in the ads were coded as representing archetypal images. Eight archetypal images of women were frequently featured: Femme Fatale/Woman as Animal, the Girl-Next-Door, the Sophisticated Upper-Class Woman, the Bathing Beauty, the Young Lover, the Pretty Woman, the Passively Seductive Woman, and the Hand. Of the 500 ads that featured women rather than just product packaging, 438 of the women represented one of these eight archetypal images.

**Results.** The results focus on decreases in the prevalence of the Sophisticated Upper-Class woman after the assassination, increases in both the Femme Fatale/Woman as Animal and the Passively Seductive Woman, and a later-period resurgence in representations of the Girl-Next-Door. In the analysis, these shifting representations of the social category of women are interpreted not just with respect to the assassination of JFK and the disappearance of Jackie Kennedy from the public eye (Perry 2004), but also with respect to other social disruptions that occurred in parallel during the time period under study. In particular, FDA approval of the birth control in 1960 (Watkins 1998), the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in the spring of 1963, and the appearance of the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan television show in late 1963 all had important consequences for American culture’s complex construction of the symbolic meanings of gender. Our analysis traces each of these social disruptions in the ongoing cultural conversation about gender that takes place even in the pages of magazines that feature advertisements for perfume and cologne.

**Conclusion.** Nuanced cultural analysis of shifting archetypal representations of women in perfume and cologne ads during this period point to the complex conversations that constitute cultural change, even when focusing simply on ads for luxury products. By identifying each strand in this conversation, our understanding of the moving collective consensus and conflict around gender is given dimensionality and dynamism. Thus, the primary contribution of this research is not in its details about this particular time period or these particular ads. Instead, its contribution to consumer research is in highlighting the importance of moving beyond research that is insensitive to temporal change, and instead finding explanations of the microscopic, yet profound, steps in the processes of cultural change.

**REFERENCES**


