

advertising

CHAPTER 11 and commercial culture



“CORPORATIONS PUT ADS ON FRUIT, ADS ALL OVER THE SCHOOLS, ADS ON CARS, ADS ON CLOTHES. THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN’T FIND ADS IS WHERE THEY BELONG: ON POLITICIANS.”

-MOLLY IVINS, SYNDICATED COLUMNIST, 2000

- ◉ The relationship between advertising and its symbols is more complicated than sponsorship agreements and sellouts to corporations.
- ◉ Millions of people happily purchase and don clothing decorated with Nike swooshes, soft drink logos, NFL sports team symbols, university names, Disney characters, or the clothing’s designer name. Others delight in a McDonald’s jingle or Geico’s lizard ads or admire the daring design of Calvin Klein print ads.
- ◉ Advertising can be an annoying, even oppressive, intrusion into our lives, but it also seems to have become a “natural” part of our popular culture’s landscape.

- Today, ads are scattered everywhere—and they are multiplying.

- Chameleon-like, advertising adapts to most media forms. At local theaters and on rented DVDs, advertisements now precede the latest Hollywood movies.



- ◉ Ads take up more than half the space in most daily newspapers and consumer magazines.
- ◉ They are inserted into trade books and textbooks.
- ◉ They clutter Web sites on the Internet.
- ◉ They fill our mailboxes and wallpaper the buses we ride.
- ◉ Dotting the nation's highways, billboards promote fast-food and hotel chains while neon signs announce the names of stores along major streets and strip malls.
- ◉ According to the Food Marketing Institute, the typical supermarket's shelves are filled with thirty thousand to fifty thousand different brand-name packages, each functioning like miniature billboards.

- ◉ Without consumer advertisements, mass communication industries would cease to function in their present forms.
- ◉ Advertising is the economic glue that holds most media industries together.
 - Yet despite advertising's importance to the economy, many of us remain skeptical about its impact on American life.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICAN ADVERTISING

- ◉ The earliest media ads were in the form of handbills, posters, and broadsides (long newsprint-quality posters).
- ◉ English booksellers printed brochures and bills announcing new publications as early as the 1470s, when posters advertising religious books were tacked on church doors.
- ◉ In 1622, print ads imitating the oral style of criers began appearing in the first English newspapers.
 - Announcing land deals and ship cargoes, the first newspaper ads in colonial America ran in the *Boston News-Letter* in 1704.

THE FIRST ADVERTISING AGENCIES

- The first American advertising agencies were really newspaper **space brokers**: individuals who purchased space in newspapers and sold it to various merchants.
 - Newspapers, accustomed to a 25 percent nonpayment rate from advertisers, welcomed the space brokers, who paid up front.
 - In return, brokers usually received discounts of 15 to 30 percent but sold the space to advertisers at the going rate.
- In 1841, Volney Palmer opened the first ad agency in Philadelphia; for a 25 percent commission, he worked for newspaper publishers and sold space to advertisers.

ADVERTISING IN THE 1800'S

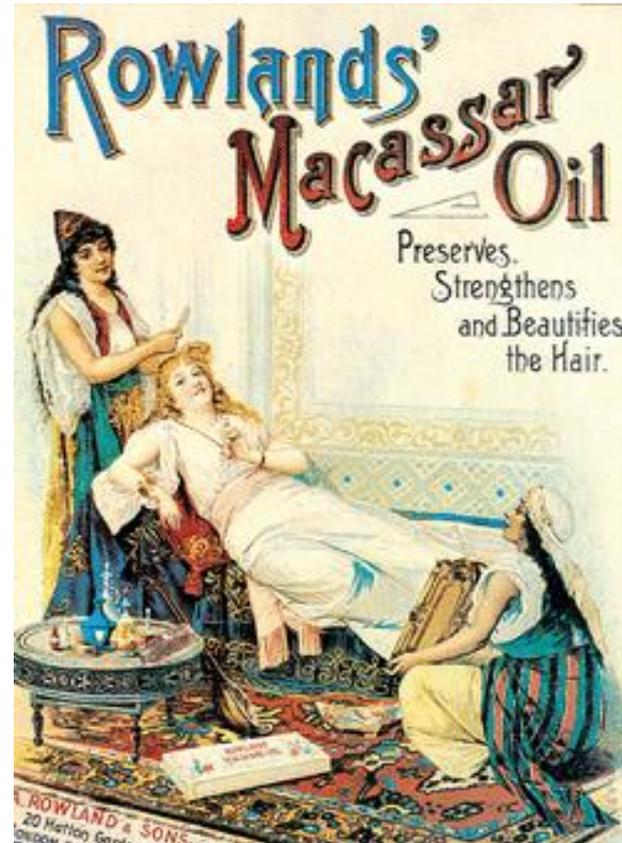
- Originally called the Joseph A. Campbell Preserve Company back in 1869, the Campbell Soup Co. introduced its classic red and white soup can labels in 1897 after an employee was inspired by the uniforms of the Cornell University football team.

- Today, the label looks different, but Campbell's red and white cans remain one of the most recognized brands in the country.



PATENT MEDICINES AND DEPARTMENT STORES

- ◉ By the end of the 1800s, patent medicines and department stores dominated advertising copy, accounting for half of the revenues taken in by ad agencies.
- ◉ During this period, one-sixth of all print ads came from patent medicine and drug companies. Such ads ensured the financial survival of numerous magazines, as “the role of the publisher changed from being a seller of a product to consumers to being a gatherer of consumers for the advertisers.”⁶



- ◉ Many contemporary products, in fact, originated as medicines. Coca-Cola, for instance, was initially sold as a medicinal tonic and even contained traces of cocaine until 1903, when that drug was replaced by caffeine.
- ◉ Early Post and Kellogg's cereal ads promised to cure stomach and digestive problems.
- ◉ Many patent medicines made outrageous claims about what they could cure, leading ultimately to increased public cynicism.
- ◉ As a result, advertisers began to police their ranks and develop industry codes to restore customer confidence. Partly to monitor patent medicine claims, the Federal Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906.

PROMOTING SOCIAL CHANGE AND DICTATING VALUES

- ◉ As U.S. advertising became more pervasive, it contributed to major social changes in the twentieth century.
- ◉ First, it significantly influenced the transition from a producer-directed to a consumer-driven society.
- ◉ By stimulating demand for new products, advertising helped manufacturers create new markets and recover product start-up costs quickly.
- ◉ By the early 1900s, advertisers and ad agencies believed that women, who constituted 70 to 80 percent of newspaper and magazine readers, controlled most household purchasing decisions. (This is still a fundamental principle of advertising today.)
- ◉ Ironically, more than 99 percent of the copywriters and ad executives at that time were men, primarily from Chicago and New York.
 - They emphasized stereotyped appeals to women, believing that simple ads with emotional and even irrational content worked best.

- By the mid-1980s, the visual techniques of MTV, which initially modeled its videos on advertising, influenced many ads and most agencies.



- MTV promoted a particular visual aesthetic—rapid edits, creative camera angles, compressed narratives, and staged performances.
- Video-style ads soon saturated television and featured such prominent performers as Ray Charles, Michael Jackson, Elton John, Madonna, and Paula Abdul.
- The popularity of MTV's visual style also started a trend in the 1980s to license hit songs for commercial tie-ins.
 - Warner Music, for example, aggressively pitched its music catalogue for use by advertisers.

IN BRANDS WE TRUST (CLIP 1)



IN BRANDS WE TRUST (CLIP 2)



IN BRANDS WE TRUST (CLIP 3)



THE ASSOCIATION PRINCIPLE

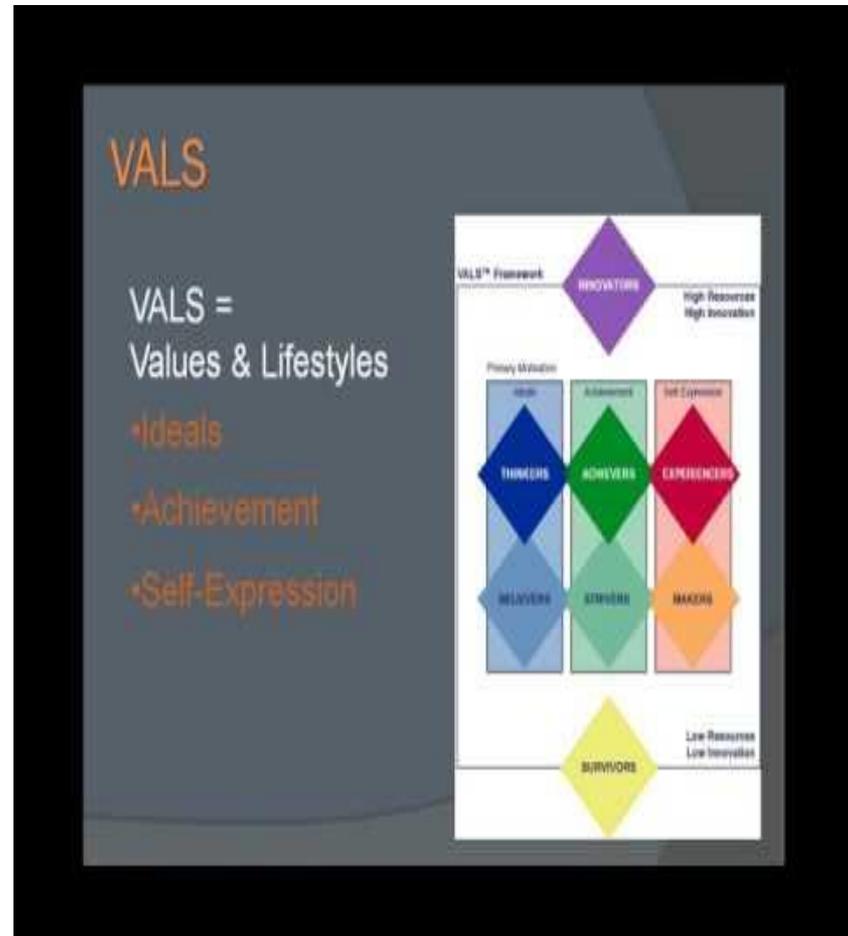
- ◎ **the association principle, a persuasive technique used in most consumer ads. Employing this principle, an ad associates a product with some cultural value or image that has a positive/negative connotation but may have little connection to the actual product.**
- ◎ **For example, many ads displayed visual symbols of American patriotism after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in an attempt to associate products and companies with national pride.**
- ◎ **In trying “to convince us that there’s an innate relationship between a brand name and an attitude,”¹¹ agencies and advertisers may associate products with nationalism, freedom, adventure, happy families, success at school or work, natural scenery, or humor.**

MARKET RESEARCH AND VALS

- ◉ **market research:** in advertising and public relations agencies, the department that uses social science techniques to assess the behaviors and attitudes of consumers toward particular products before any ads are created.
- ◉ **demographics:** in market research, the study of audiences or consumers by age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, education, and income.
- ◉ **psychographics:** in market research, the study of audience or consumer attitudes, beliefs, interests, and motivations.
- ◉ **focus group:** a common research method in psychographic analysis in which a moderator leads a small-group discussion about a product or an issue, usually with six to twelve people.

VALUES AND LIFESTYLES (VALS)

- a market-research strategy that divides consumers into types and measures psychological factors, including how consumers think and feel about products and how they achieve (or do not achieve) the lifestyles to which they aspire.

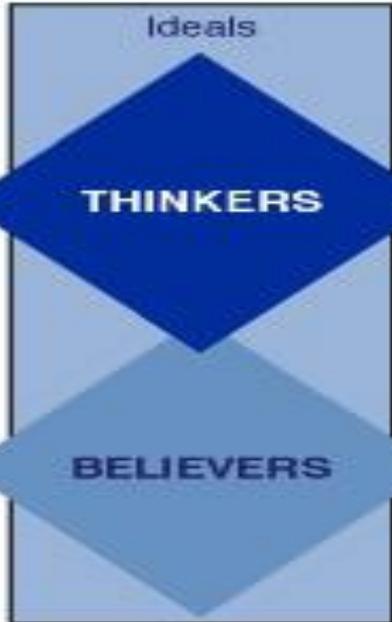


VALS™ Framework



**High Resources
High Innovation**

Primary Motivation



**Low Resources
Low Innovation**

- **Innovators** - The class of consumer at the top of the Vals framework. They are characterized by High income and high resource individuals for whom independence is very important. They have their own individual taste in things and are motivated in achieving the finer things in life.
- **Survivors** - The class of consumers in the Vals framework with the least resources and therefore the least likely to adopt any innovation. As they are not likely to change their course of action regularly, they form into brand loyal customers. An example can include old age pension earners living alone for whom the basic necessities are important and they are least likely to concentrate on anything else.

Ideals

- ◉ **Thinkers** - A well educated professional is an excellent example of Thinkers in the vals framework. These are the people who have high resources and are motivated by their knowledge. These are the rational decision making consumers and are well informed about their surroundings. These consumers are likely to accept any social change because of their knowledge level.
- ◉ **Believers** - The subtle difference between thinkers and believers is that thinkers make their own decisions whereas believers are more social in nature and hence also believe other consumers. They are characterized by lower resources and are less likely to accept innovation on their own. They are the best class of word of mouth consumers.

Achievement

- ◉ Achievers - The achievers are mainly motivated by - guess what - Achievements. These individuals want to excel at their job as well in their family. Thus they are more likely to purchase a brand which has shown its success over time. The achievers are said to be high resource consumers but at the same time, if any brand is rising, they are more likely to adopt that brand faster.
- ◉ Strivers - Low resource consumer group which wants to reach some achievement are known as strivers. These customers do not have the resources to be an achiever. But as they have values similar to an achiever, they fall under the striver category. If a striver can gain the necessary resources such as a high income or social status then he can move on to becoming an achiever.

Self Expression

- Experiencers - The group of consumers who have high resources but also need a mode of self expression are known as Experiencers. Mostly characterized by young adults, it consists of people who want to experience being different. This class of consumers is filled up with early adopters who spend heavily on food, clothing and other youthful products and services.
- Makers - These are consumers who also want self expression but they are limited by the number of resources they have. Thus they would be more focused towards building a better family rather than going out and actually spending higher amount of money. Making themselves into better individuals and families becomes a form of self expression for the Makers.

PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES IN CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING - CONVENTIONAL PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES

- ◉ **famous-person testimonial:** an advertising strategy that associates a product with the endorsement of a well-known person.
- ◉ **plain-folks pitch:** an advertising strategy that associates a product with simplicity and the common person.
- ◉ **snob appeal:** an advertising strategy that attempts to convince consumers that using a product will enable them to maintain or elevate their social station.
- ◉ **bandwagon effect:** an advertising strategy that incorporates exaggerated claims that everyone is using a particular product, so you should, too.
- ◉ **hidden-fear appeal:** an advertising strategy that plays on a sense of insecurity, trying to persuade consumers that only a specific product can offer relief.
- ◉ **irritation advertising:** an advertising strategy that tries to create product-name recognition by being annoying or obnoxious.

ADVERTISING AS MYTH

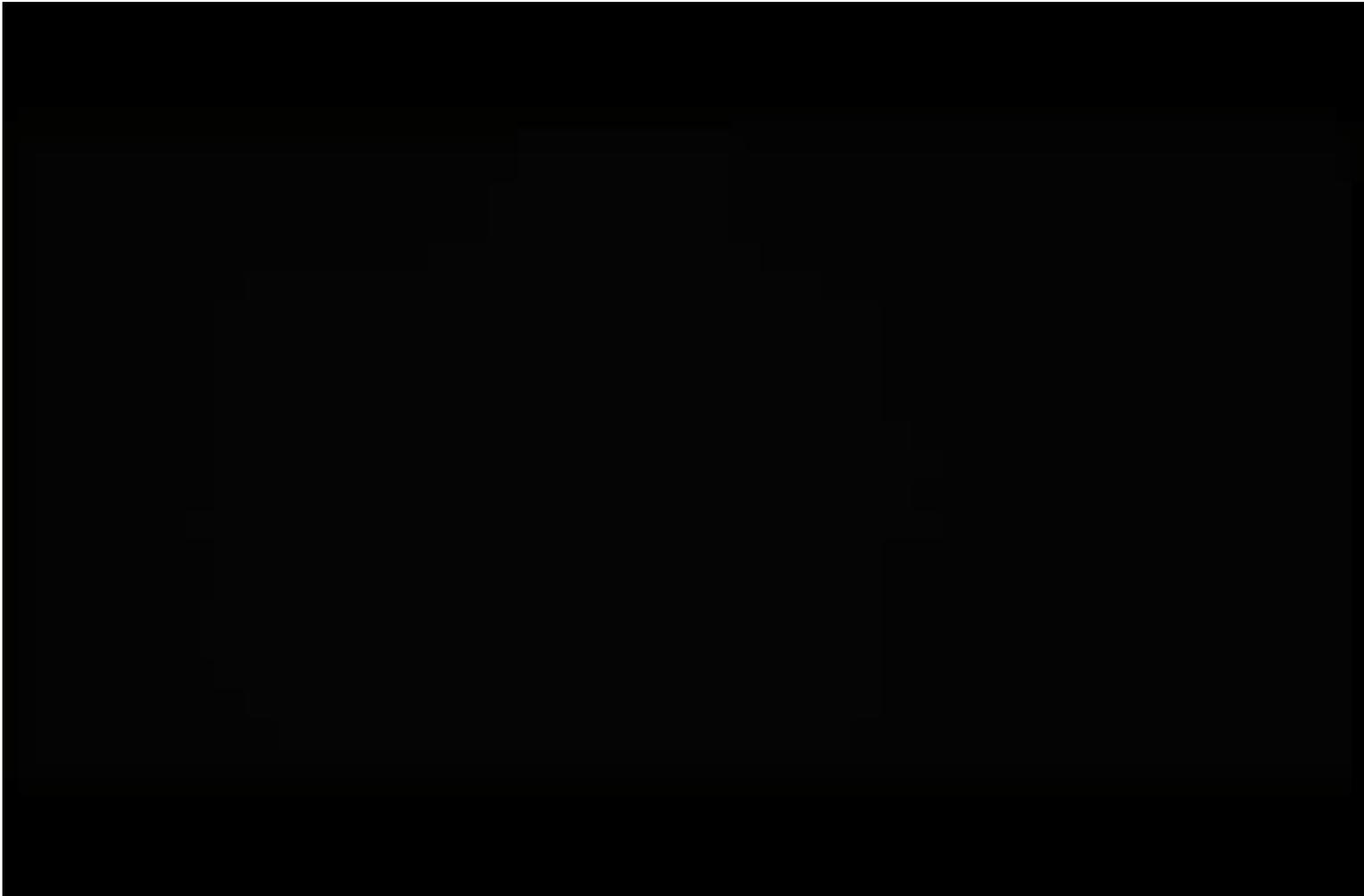
- ◉ **myth analysis: a strategy for critiquing advertising that provides insights into how ads work on a cultural level; according to this strategy, ads are narratives with stories to tell and social conflicts to resolve.**
- ◉ Myths are the stories a society constructs to bring order to the conflicts and contradictions of everyday life.
- ◉ Three common mythical elements are found in many types of ads:
 - Ads incorporate myths in mini-story form, featuring characters, settings, and plots.
 - Most stories in ads involve conflicts, pitting one set of characters or social values against another.
 - Such conflicts are negotiated or resolved by the end of the ad, usually by applying or purchasing a product. In advertising, the product and those who use it often emerge as the heroes of the story.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

- ◉ **product placement:** the advertising practice of strategically placing products in movies, TV shows, comic books, and video games so the products appear as part of a story's set environment.
- Will Ferrell's 2006 movie *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* satirized the over-the-top product placement advertising that supports NASCAR.



IN BRANDS WE TRUST (CLIP 4)



ADVERTISING'S THREAT TO JOURNALISM

- ◉ With many dailies facing financial difficulties in the 1990s and the early 2000s, some editors turned their investigative eyes away from controversial business stories in order to keep advertisers happy.
- ◉ Local television news outlets are also subject to advertiser pressure.
- ◉ A survey by the nonprofit Project for Excellence in Journalism in 2004 found that one-third of local journalists had been pressured by advertisers or corporate owners about what to write or broadcast.

ADVERTISING, POLITICS, AND DEMOCRACY

- ◉ Through its seemingly endless supply of pervasive and persuasive strategies, advertising today saturates the cultural landscape. Its ubiquity raises serious questions about our privacy and the ease with which companies can gather data on our consumer habits.
- ◉ As advertising has become more pervasive and consumers more discriminating, ad practitioners have searched for ways to weave their work more seamlessly into the social and cultural fabric. Products now blend in as props or even as “characters” in TV shows and movies.
- ◉ Among the more intriguing efforts to appear a seamless part of the culture are the ads that exploit, distort, or transform the political and cultural meanings of popular music.
- ◉ A more straightforward form of cultural blending is **political advertising**, the use of ad techniques to promote a candidate’s image and persuade the public to adopt a particular viewpoint.
- ◉ As individuals and as a society, we have developed an uneasy relationship with advertising.
 - ***we should remain critical of what advertising has come to represent: the overemphasis on commercial acquisitions, the overreliance on compelling images rather than substantial print information, and the disparity between those who can afford to live comfortably in a commercialized society and those who cannot.***