A Look into Ladies Home Journal:
Tracking the trends and changes of strategy, themes and messaging in women’s health and beauty products advertising from 1970 to 2009

Management Department
Pamela Schindler, Wittenberg University
ABSTRACT

This study discusses a content analysis of advertisement strategy and messaging of health and beauty products in Ladies Home Journal from 1970 to 2009 and indicates that the messaging and underlying creative strategy used in advertising in Ladies Home Journal within specific health and beauty categories has not significantly changed in the past 40 years. This disproves the original thesis that sought to show that due to environmental changes (e.g., the changing roles of women in society, rapidly advancing technology, the explosion of media options, the decrease in overall magazine use, and the increase in the percentage of women in the workforce) that messaging and creative strategy for perfume, hair care, skin care, makeup and personal hygiene ads would change dramatically over time, both overall and within each category. Instead these product categories used similar “big idea” creative strategies over the past four decades. The popular categories of “big ideas” included celebrity endorsers, everyday user (shows a person using the product), product demo (shows the product ready to use), and user endorsers. The strategy of using celebrities and beautiful models as celebrity endorsers actually became more prevalent in the recent decade. The common themes and messages of the advertisements are product effectiveness, sex appeal, product quality, and the ability of the product to make women appear younger. This last theme has become increasingly common in recent years. This research proves that what advertisers believed to be effective in magazine advertising for women 40 years ago, regardless of environmental changes, they still believe works in magazine advertising for today’s women.

Common themes of the products advertised are effectiveness, sex appeal, and quality. This last theme, the image that a product will make you look and feel young, has become increasingly common in recent years.
THESIS

The messaging and strategy in ads for perfume, hair care, skin care, makeup and personal hygiene targeted to women via magazine advertising will change dramatically over time, both overall and within each product category.

INTRODUCTION

The Advertising Themes and Messages

The use of an advertising theme is a marketing technique that advertisers have been using for decades. Themes are chosen by “creating [a] new dimension [for considering the product] or making existing dimensions that are unimportant to consumers [seem] important” (pg.7, Tauber). This encourages the marketer to focus on the consumer, as the consumer “knows and can tell us what are the opportunities” because these are the products and services that are important to them today (pg. 7, Tauber). In effect, consumers reveal the desired themes in a product category just by giving their opinion of what it is important to them right now.

The specific message is that “one central thought, that ‘One Thing’ you can say about a product” that then helps in the concepting process that serves as the “bridge between strategy and tactics” (pg. 77, Altstiel & Grow). Messages are specific executions of themes. Ads use headlines, visuals, and body copy to convey their message.

Specific messages are categorized into themes. For example, these two ads, both from June 2000, for RETINAL skin care and Revlon Age Defying makeup, use the following headlines: “Are you getting enough RETINOL to visibly reduce wrinkles?” and “Give yourself a lift!. The copy for the RETINAL ad uses statistics to show your wrinkles can be reduced in a short period of time and the Revlon ad uses a celebrity endorser who shows there can be an actually physical change in your skin. While each ad chose a different message, words and
images, they both share the theme that the use of their product will make you look and feel younger (June 2000, Ladies Home Journal).
Are You Getting Enough RETINOL* To Visibly Reduce Wrinkles?

**INDEPENDENT VITAMIN A (RETINOL) COMPARISON**

IU amounts shown are highest Vitamin A (Retinol) content per gram as measured in independent laboratory tests.

Get more deep absorbing Retinol (Active Vitamin-A) for visibly reducing wrinkles with **Advanced Retinol-A** from FACE LIFT. A pure Retinol formula plus time released Retinol and Vitamin C. Now you can get 100% more of these effective yet gentle ingredients without a prescription. See the difference for yourself - if you're not fully satisfied just mail us your sales receipt and remaining product for a full refund.
NOW NIVEA VISAGE Q10 WRINKLE CONTROL COMES IN A LOTION.
Now your skin's level of Q10 can be restored with the added protection of SPF 15.
NIVEA brings your face to life.™

GIVE YOURSELF A LIFT!™
LIFTS FINE LINES UP, UP AND AWAY!
IT'S AN ACTUAL PHYSICAL CHANGE: AN INCREDIBLE 30% LINE REDUCTION IN JUST 2 WEEKS!
GOES ON GEL-SMOOTH
WITH SOY EXTRACTS AND VITAMINS A, C, AND E
SPF 20 UVA/UVB

AGE DEFYING
ALL-DAY LIFTING FOUNDATION

DON'T LIE ABOUT YOUR AGE.
DEFY IT!
— MELANIE GRIFFITH

NEW IDEA
The Advertising Big Idea

The big idea is the broad strategy that is used in the creative execution of the specific theme and message that an advertiser wants to convey to its target audience. Big ideas can be categorized (e.g., celebrity endorsers, user endorsers, etc.) but what differentiates one ad from others using the same big idea is the style and the incorporation of the message into that big idea.

Often advertisers blame themselves when there is a lack of consumer interest in their product. This is where big ideas come into play. A big idea is the creative approach to communicating a message to make the “public realize that there is a need for the product” (pg. 48, Baker). For example: In the health and beauty product categories marketers are all about creating and discovering a “hidden benefit -- something not apparent on the surface -- or even a special advantage that people don't realize or won't admit” (pg. 50, Baker). A great example of this type of ad appeared in the June 2000 edition of Ladies Home Journal. The ad was for Dry Idea deodorant and how it has great protection but leaves no residue behind. The headline was “Touch here to see what Dry Idea leaves behind.” (Ladies Home Journal, June 2000). The copy also describes that the deodorant not only keeps you dry but keeps you feeling clean with no left over residue. While it is clearly important to have not only a message about differential benefits, it is even more important that you “put it over -- you must sell it -- or the idea might as well not exist” (pg. 90, Baker). “Putting it over” is another way of saying the ad needs a ‘big idea,’ a creative strategy for selling the message. In this specific deodorant ad, the idea was over sold by using a user endorser and the product in use. A metaphor was also used to show the softness of the deodorant on your skin while still being good a providing protection. Over selling the benefits of the product is especially important in the health and beauty market where consumers have a variety of different options at very low cost differential.
Environmental Changes

Over the past four decades there have been many changes to our culture and for women in our society. These changes include: the development and explosion of the computer and then, in turn, the Internet; several wars and military actions; recessions followed by periods of prosperity; high employment followed by deep unemployment; inflation followed by deflation; women becoming primary wage earners; the increase in the percentage of women in the workforce and the advance of women in the workforce to positions of power; the explosion of media options; the decrease in overall magazine use; the green movement; as well as significant world events. These environmental changes weren’t well represented in all vehicles carry advertising to women. With the explosion of the Internet it might be expected that every ad in the 2000s would have an action objective that told the consumer to go to the website. With the trends in employment and inflation/deflation it would be expected that price and value might be the main focus, but this again was not the case. Also, because women have advanced so far in the workplace, one might expect that ads would portray more women in the workplace setting, or have powerful working women celebrities used as endorsers, but this again, was not the case.

Methodology

In an effort to see the development and execution of big ideas over time, this research studied the changes in advertising themes, messaging, and the execution of big ideas from 1970-2009 in health and beauty products in Ladies Home Journal.

Magazines are one of the few mediums where the evolution of its ads is traceable all the way back to when it started, making it a most effective medium for seeing the evolution of themes, messages, and big ideas through time. It has also been proven that magazines “drive consumer attitudes and intended behavior more effectively than viewing television advertising
on its own” (pg. 24, “New Study Says Magazines a more Effective Buy than Online, TV”). Magazines also had the greatest impact on consumer attitudes in the following categories: “brand awareness, brand favorability and purchase intent at the action stage of the purchase funnel” (pg. 24, “New Study Says Magazines a more Effective Buy than Online, TV”). This therefore, made the use of magazines appropriate for my study. Why Ladies Home Journal?

Ladies Home Journal is one of the oldest women’s magazines in the United States. In publication since before the 1900s, the appearance of the magazine and its advertisements have changed tremendously over the time that it has been in print. The magazine has transformed from black and white, to some color, to today’s full-color, 8½” x 11” size. The magazine’s readership consists of adults, with the vast majority being women. The average age is 53.2 with the majority of readers being over the age of 30. (Audience: Adults, Ladies Home Journal). This age range represents the changes that have happened to women and been reflected in the content of Ladies Home Journal since its inception. Magazines which began publishing after the 1940s feature content directed towards a much younger generation.

Today the women who read Ladies Home Journal represent a large demographic cohort with a lot of them being part of the baby boomer generation and generation x. They have similar interests and have had similar experiences. They are also a generally affluent and educated group with the average household income being $55,249, the average home value being $244,715, and 53.4% of the demographic having completed at least their undergraduate degree. (Audience: Adults, Ladies Home Journal). This is significantly above the average income in the United States as 79.62% of Americans in 2008 had an average income below $55,000 (2008 Census). According to Advertising Strategy, this high household income means that this magazine is perceived as prestigious, and therefore infers that the products featured in advertisements are prestigious as well (pg. 195, Altstiel & Grow).
Over the period covered in this study, the advertisements and articles contained much of the same content in each decade as it does in 2010 does. While Ladies Home Journal was unable to provide information regarding their specific demographics in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, based on content it seems as though the demographics have not significantly changed over the past 40 years. The absence of such a shift would not have had a significant impact on the ads in the magazine. Because of the consistent demographics and content and the availability of back issues, Ladies Home Journal, was the best option to study the changes in advertising big ideas, themes, and messaging. The consistent availability of back issues was one reason why Ladies Home Journal was the only magazine studied. Other magazines were not consistently available for the 1940s through the 2009 period.

Primary research for this study was conducted by methodically cataloging all health and beauty half-page or larger ads, excluding ads in the classified section, appearing in each January and June issue of Ladies Home Journal every five years starting in 1970 through 2009. Half-page or larger ads included in paper copies of Ladies Home Journal as well as microfilm versions were cataloged for each January and June edition of the following years: 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2009. Because of the extremely large sample size that would have resulted from looking at all health and beauty ads in every year, and that fact that the ads were very similar from issue to issue, it was decided that a sample from two issues, five years apart would be a large enough sample to draw a conclusion. December and June issues were chosen to get a sense of the impact, if any, of seasonality. While December issues included more personal care ads along with an increase in the overall number of pages of advertisements in the magazine, they were excluded because of the influence of holiday themes.

This methodology yielded 263 ads and 21 data points to review and analyze for each ad, including: date, size of ad, product category, big idea category, headline, color, copy main idea, presence of statistics, action objective, communication objective, aspect of product featured,
image of product, if the ad complimented the magazine’s editorial content, if a woman was pictured, if the woman who was pictured in the ad was pictured as a celebrity, model or everyday woman, what else was pictured in the ad, if the product was being used, if it was implied that the product was being or had been used, and what else was going on in the advertisement.

The ads in Ladies Home Journal were predominately health and beauty, prescription drugs and food products. Therefore, it was decided that only health and beauty products would be looked at considering that much of the content of the magazine also revolved around this topic. Only healthy and beauty ads that could be grouped within the following subcategories were studied: hair care, makeup, perfume, personal hygiene, and skin care. In this study personal hygiene ads were any ads for products that had to do with personal care excluding hair or skin care. These latter two categories contained too many ads to be considered within the personal hygiene category. Examples of products within the personal hygiene category were: deodorant, tooth paste, and feminine hygiene products.

Big ideas and themes were categorized by what was pictured in the visual and how that aligned with the headlines. Keys to determining which big idea was being used in the ad were: what type of woman was featured (celebrity or everyday), if the woman featured was endorsing the product or just using the product, and in what way the product was featured. Clues in the headlines and copy included: if a celebrity’s name was listed, if an everyday women or everyday use was mentioned, and if statistics or scientific evidence were used.

Statistical analysis on all data points was done using SPSS. The data from the SPSS matrix was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics, cross tabulations, and the chi square test. Thorough analysis was done of a variety of different combination of variables
mostly focusing on the big ideas and what was common throughout the implementation and execution of these big ideas.

The Sample

**Hair Care % within Decade**

- **n=48**

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<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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**Makeup % within Decade**

- **n=36**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2000s</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
perfume % within decade
n=36

- 1 - 1970s
- 2 - 1980s
- 3 - 1990s
- 4 - 2000s

Personal hygiene % within decade
n=63

- 1 - 1970s
- 2 - 1980s
- 3 - 1990s
- 4 - 2000s
Limitations

No doubt if ads from other magazines had been studied, inferring from the results found might have shown more variance in big idea, theme and message than the sample examined. But consistency in using the same magazine over time was seen to be more important to seeing trends. It was also sometimes difficult to categorize big ideas as some ads often featured characteristics of more than one big idea.

FINDINGS

Big Ideas

Each advertiser chose similar big ideas strategies even though each of the products within each product category represents an intensely competitive market space. There are vast numbers of brands for each product category, meaning a large number of competitors and/or substitutes. According to Porters Five Forces of the competitive market place this means that there is an intense rivalry among these competitors and the consumers have a large amount of buying power. Therefore, advertising is extremely important to help facilitate the demand for a
specific product, to reinforce positive attitudes about the product and to reduce any cognitive dissonance that may surround the product or the product category. By using a big idea that reduces this dissonance, for example a user endorser or an expert endorser, the advertiser can use the strategy to persuade consumers to buy their product. By executing a unique version of these successful strategies, advertisers can both reduce dissonance and attract attention to their product.

Achieving differentiation is an even more difficult task because decisions to buy within these product categories are generally low involvement when it comes to price but high risk when it comes to social factors. This varies depending on product category but low financial risk decision and high social risk decision means that catching the consumer’s attention and giving the product a differential benefit or differential advantage is extremely important. The target audience of Ladies Home Journal, since it is fairly affluent, is more focused by the high social risk decision than the low financial risk decision. They need to feel assured that the product will give them the benefits they are looking for from that product. Using the interpersonal (social) and personal (attitudes, perceptions, needs and wants and self-concept) determinants for these product categories is the most effective way for advertisers to effectively gain status and thus market share. This translates into using big ideas that allow advertisers to over sell the social benefits of their product. For example, in celebrity endorser or user of the product big ideas, they use characters who the target audience trusts and will look to when purchasing a product that affects their social status. By using these these strategies the advertisers play into the targets audiences’ social desires to look like celebrities and personal desires of what they desire to look and feel like.

Overall, the advertisements that were included in this study seemed to follow very similar creative strategies. The big ideas included were:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea Label</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Count/%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday user</td>
<td>Features a person who uses the product every day, not endorsing the product</td>
<td>88/33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product demo</td>
<td>Display of the product and how to use or its benefits</td>
<td>66/25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User endorser</td>
<td>A user of the product who is endorsing the product and giving a personal</td>
<td>26/9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific</td>
<td>The use of statistics or other facts to give a product a differential</td>
<td>24/9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence</td>
<td>benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>Use of celebrity or model to give the product credibility</td>
<td>22/8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>Compares the product to another product in the same category</td>
<td>17/6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert endorser</td>
<td>Expert (ex: doctor) who gives the product credibility</td>
<td>13/4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Use of a contest, coupon or other promotion in an ad</td>
<td>7/2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the creative approach showed that the big idea was very similar throughout decades and the different product subcategories. Generally, the creative approach was to show the effects of the product on a woman who would use the product every day. For many women seeing the “woman next door” cured of whatever her ailment might be by using this product can be enough for them to try the product themselves. The endorser is a powerful big idea strategy and explains why nearly all of the ads pictured women (everyday user, or a celebrity/model). The endorser strategy is powerful because it takes women who the target audience trusts and has them use their personal experience to advertise the product. When it comes to health and beauty products women want to hear what other women think about the product and often turn to their friends and peers for advice. The endorser strategy is the closest that advertising can get to peer-to-peer recommendations. When women weren’t pictured, the advertiser often pictured their children or husbands, people who it is assumed influence the woman’s purchases on a daily basis.
As seen in Figure 1, nearly every big idea saw fluctuation from decade to decade. The most frequently used big idea in each decade was

- the 1970s, the comparative
- the 1980s, the user endorser
- the 1990s, the everyday user
- the 2000s, the expert endorser

Both the scientific evidence and promotion big ideas became very popular in the 2000s after having decreased/stayed the same in popularity in the 1990s. This shift in strategy over the four decades is indicative of the fact that people changed who they trusted and in the trends and culture of the country as a whole. Initially, it was enough for advertisements to prove how much more effective one product was compared to another in the category. Then, as distrust of business increased, these same advertisers needed to provide user endorsers and everyday users. This change was because consumers wanted to hear from their peers and reference group that this product really does what it claims to do. With so many different products and substitute options the consumer wants to know which products will work and those to not even bother trying. For example, celebrity endorsers are more popular than ever in the 2000s. Celebrities in today’s culture have grown to have so much status and weight in our culture that consumers truly trust what celebrities are endorsing. Look at the Tiger Woods example. Before his personal scandal, he was the perfect endorser for a product that wanted to attract sports fans and athletes, business consulting services buyers, or car buyers. Now today, the companies he endorses are thinking twice about what having him endorsing them says for their brand (Figure 1).

By looking at how the products were used in the ads we can see why collectively the big ideas didn't change over the four decades examined. In Figure 8 we see that almost none of the
big ideas in the study actually showed the woman using the product. Instead these ads featured women whose image implied that that they have used the product (Figure 9). This makes sense because the nature of the products in the health and beauty categories aren’t attractive until the end results are seen. For example, some shampoos claim to give hair volume and shine. This can’t be seen while the woman is washing her hair but rather after it is styled. Therefore, because this aspect of the products didn’t change in the four decades, collectively the big ideas over the four decades also didn’t change.

The execution of the big idea through use of the image of the woman, usage of the product, use of action objective (asking the woman to take a specific action that brings her closer to purchase), and use of statistics changed based on the product category (Figures 4, 5). For example, skin care ads were more likely to use the scientific evidence big idea to show how to improve moisture in your skin than for perfume. For perfume women just want to see that an attractive woman (celebrity endorser or user of product) uses the product and know that the product has an attractive smell; in the latter case, the scientific evidence big idea was unnecessary, even undesirable, to prove product effectiveness. This can also be seen in the decisions that advertisers use when deciding what image of a woman to portray. For skin care women would rather see that someone they can relate to is using the product (user endorser or everyday user big ideas), while for perfume, they would rather see an attractive celebrity endorser who they aspire to look like using the product.

In the 2000s, people needed more than just a user endorsing the product they needed an expert to recommend the product. This big idea had been limitedly used in the 1970s and 1980s but was none existent in the 1990s and then became the dominant big idea used in the 2000s. Advances in science and technology in the last 40 years have significantly influenced how many personal care products are designed and produced. In today’s economy consumers want to know that the products they are spending their disposable income on are products that
they can rely on and are guaranteed to work the way they want them to. By having an expert in the field (for example a dermatologist) endorse a product, it is saying to a consumer that this is guaranteed to work. This might not be as important when the market is doing better and consumers have more disposable income to spend on products.

While the majority of ads, regardless of their chosen big idea, tended to exclude an action objective (Figure 3); promotion and celebrity endorser big ideas provided the exception. The promotion big idea generally had an action objective associated with it because included in this category are advertisers offering contests in which you need to enter, coupons that you need to redeem and websites that need to be visited in order to receive the benefit of the promotion. The idea behind a promotion is to get the target audience to act and, therefore, it makes sense that advertisers employ action objectives in designing their ads. For the celebrity endorsers, there were often either contests or websites listed in the ad as well. This could be perhaps because of the expense that comes along with using a celebrity endorser or could be to try to measure the effectiveness of the campaign. Celebrity endorser ads are generally focused on enhancing product image, which can be hard to measure. By including a contest or website the advertiser ensures that there is a call to action and response from the consumer which can be a one indicator of the attention-getting effectiveness of the campaign.

As Figure 4 shows, the majority of ads not only didn't have an action objective but also didn't use statistics, even for big ideas in which you would expect to have statistical evidence. For example, expert endorsers and scientific evidence big idea ads had more ads without statistics than with statistics. One would think that these big ideas would contain statistical information in order to support the scientific evidence and/or expert who is endorsing the product. The presence of statistics by decade did not vary much from 1970 to 1990 but in 2000 the number of ads that were using statistics doubled as can be seen in Figure 5. The reasoning behind this could be again, that people are looking for products that they can trust and statistics
usually increase the level of confidence in the product for consumers. Take today’s economy as an example. Consumer’s budgets are tighter and that means that they are spending their money more carefully, and that they need the reassurance that when they do spend money on a product, the product will do what it is meant to and not be a waste of money. Also, in this age of technology, information is everything. People want to know everything about the products they are using. By providing them with key statistics about your product you are saving them the step of going to look it up and possibly finding statistics from other sources that might not be as favorable.

Another interesting finding had to do with the size of ads that were found. As seen in Figure 2, regardless of big ideas the overwhelming majority of ads were between 1/2 page and 1 page. This could be because the advertisers felt they could get the message they needed to convey in one page or less rather than paying for a two page spread. Also the big ideas that were found in this study are indicative of being able to be executed in one page or less.

In the ads in which women consumers are pictured they are not necessarily using the product but it is implied that they previously used the product (Figure 9). The product is also often pictured in the ad indicating how it should be used and by highlighting the primary benefits that come from the product when it is used correctly. The usage of women did change along with the change in big ideas. First women were featured as everyday users, then the everyday women became endorsers and now the women featured are either celebrities or experts. Results can be seen in Figure 7. The comparative, scientific evidence, product demo and expert endorser big ideas didn't have women pictured in them. This is because they either had the product pictured or an endorser who wasn't a woman. This was especially interesting given the advances that women have made in once male-dominated careers. It was expected that women would be seen in these same careers being the endorser rather than an advertiser using a male. But since these experts were males, it clearly shows that advertisers believe that women
consumers believe males are more credible or feel they are more believable. Perhaps too, since many of these males were attractive, they believed the sex appeal of these male experts would catch the target audiences’ attention. On the other hand everyday users and user endorsers were overwhelming women; showing that women trust other women in their reference groups. The image of the women pictured in the execution of the big ideas yielded very similar results, as seen in Figure 6. For example, you don't expect to see a celebrity in an everyday user or even user of the product ad. This would not be using the celebrity effectively and is better achieved by using an everyday woman, who looks like the consumer. Also it wouldn't make sense to use a celebrity as an expert endorser in a skin care ad unless they had a degree in dermatology as well. These examples and the images of women used in ads make sense when looking at the definition of the big ideas and what they are trying to achieve by using it.

Though each of the different product categories uses similar big ideas and strategies, and these have not changed significantly in the past four decades there is some difference in the execution style of each of these product categories. The main differences lie in the communication objectives, messaging and actual execution of headlines, copy, action objectives and selection of images.

The environmental factors did not have as big an impact on the usage of big ideas as one would think. For example, while expert endorsers are being used more than ever in the 2000s decade, these endorsers are generally not women but rather men. This is interesting seeing that women have gained positions of power in the work place and have gained many of the jobs in these professional fields. Also, it is surprising that promotions big idea was not used in the periods of high unemployment and inflation. Many promotions that were seen were money coupons and buy one get one half off deals that would make sense during these time periods.
There were some big ideas that did follow closely to environmental changes. For example, it is no surprise that the scientific evidence big idea has grown with the growth of the green movement. Much of what the green movement focuses on is the statistics and facts about how the environment is affected by the product we use. Therefore, as this green movement keeps growing, we should also see growth in the scientific evidence field. It is also no surprise that celebrity endorsers have become extremely popular in recent years. With the explosion of different media outlets celebrities have become a constant, everyday part of our lives. Because of our constant awareness of them, it makes sense that advertisers are using them to endorse their products.

Figures

![Figure 1- Big idea by decade](image-url)
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<th>Value</th>
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<td>.003</td>
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<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
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<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
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Figure 2- Size of ad by big idea
n=263

Figure 2- Size of ad by big idea
n=263
Figure 3- Presence of action objective by big idea
n= 263

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea</th>
<th>None % within Big Idea</th>
<th>Yes % within Big Idea</th>
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<tr>
<td>user endorser</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>scientific evidence</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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<td>promotion</td>
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<td>40.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
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<td>comparative</td>
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<td>celebrity endorser</td>
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Chi-Square Tests

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Figure 4- Presence of statistical support  
n=263

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<th>Big Idea</th>
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<tr>
<td>user endorser</td>
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<td>scientific evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>product demo</td>
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<tr>
<td>expert endorser</td>
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Chi-Square Tests

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Chi-Square Tests

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a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.37.

Figure 5- Statistical Presence by decade
Figure 6- Image of Women pictured in ads by big idea
n=263

Chi-Square Tests

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Figure 7- Women pictured in ads by big idea
n=263

<table>
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<th>Big Idea</th>
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<td>product demo</td>
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<td>expert endorser</td>
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<tr>
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### Chi-Square Tests

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</table>

Figure 8- Women using product within ad by big idea
n=263

![Bar chart showing women using product within ad by big idea](chart.png)

Legend:
- Red: yes % within Big Idea
- Blue: no % within Big Idea
### Chi-Square Tests

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</table>

#### Figure 9- Implied product use in ads by big idea

n=263

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big Idea</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>user endorser</td>
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<td>scientific evidence</td>
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<td>promotion</td>
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<td>product demo</td>
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<tr>
<td>expert endorser</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyday user</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comparative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>celebrity endorser</td>
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</table>
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

BIG IDEAS

There were nine different big ideas and within each of the five different product subcategories the use of these big ideas was very different. Each subcategory had a few big ideas that were the most frequently implemented and executed by advertisers. It was the execution of the big ideas in each category that was truly different.

The hair care and makeup categories ads found in Ladies Home Journal used two totally different approaches. This can be seen in Figure 10 and Figure 13. The hair care ads were overwhelming implementing the everyday user and product guarantee big ideas, while the makeup category used celebrities who are relevant to the Ladies Home Journal demographic. The reason behind this difference could lie in who the women look to for advice when choosing the two different products. In hair care, women truly do look to their membership reference group (their peers, friends and family members) for advice on what hair care products are affordable, work well, and for advice how they look and how to style their hair. For makeup though, the use of celebrities was especially effective because social influences are a significant influence for women when it comes to how they look. The idea of status is often associated with celebrities and therefore, is also associated with these makeup brands. These celebrities serve as aspirational reference groups. The use of celebrities also makes it appear that these makeup brands are luxury goods. Women fulfill their social/belongingness and esteem needs by buying products that celebrities also use. These conviction level campaigns use the apparent psychological benefits of using makeup that is used by celebrities to get women to buy their product. Also closely related to the message of a high quality product is the idea behind the product guarantee big idea. The use of a pull strategy is seen in the majority of the ads for both categories, but some effects of the push strategy are there as well. The pull strategy is a tactic in which the advertisers try to pull the consumer in and get them to buy the product. The push
strategy is when advertisers attempt to influence consumers through pushing the idea down through their reference group. The ads appeal to the individual but the brands also want the individual to go out and advise their reference group to purchase the product as well. Therefore, the main objective for advertising most of these brands was to generate interest in their product and build their brand.

As seen in Figure 16, the two most frequently used big ideas in the perfume category were celebrity endorsers and product demo. With the celebrity endorser big idea it was very common for the celebrity who developed the fragrance and for whom the fragrance was named to be pictured in the advertisement. With the product demo big idea the focal points of the ads were the perfume package and occasionally a beautiful woman in the background. The one thing that both big ideas had in common was the sex appeal theme. While the brands may have taken different broad strategies, the theme of sex appeal is still engrained in both types of advertising strategies. Perfume is low in cognitive involvement and high in affective involvement and therefore, most consumers in this category follow the feel-do-learn model. They have an emotional response to the product, buy the product, and then learn about it from their experience. Therefore, other big ideas that could be successful in this category could be user endorsers. These women could also reflect the sex appeal but in a very different, maybe even more real way than the celebrities can.

In the personal hygiene category, the most popular big ideas were the user endorser, product comparative and product demo as Figure 19 shows. These big ideas fit very well into the strategy of using comprehension or conviction level campaigns. More than any other product category these ads played into women’s vulnerabilities and tried to be discreet all while getting the message across. By using endorsers the product ads are able to really give first hand experiences. There is nothing that a woman trusts more than the opinion of another woman and what she did or didn't get out of the product. Also by showing the product
competing with another in the ad it gives the woman the ability to see how it really works and if it is a product they would be interested in it. These big ideas also help to flaunt and prove the very real benefits of the product. The approach that these advertisers took seemed to be much more effective than the approach that the perfume advertisers took. This was because this approach shows real women, with real issues and how their product can help ease the issues and provide women with real benefits rather than alluding to an image of a woman who they could aspire to be without providing any real benefits to the consumer.

The skin care category advertisements were differentiated by the big ideas that were used. Figure 21 shows that while product demo and user endorser were at the top of the big idea list, so were the scientific evidence and expert endorser big ideas. These ads used statistics either in the headline or body copy of the advertisement. This was extremely effective because of the quantifiable benefits seen from use of the products. Using statistics goes hand in hand with scientific evidence as much of the stats had to do with studies that prove that the product was more effective or well-liked than another, similar product.

While each product category had different big ideas that were used and different reasons behind their strategy, none of the categories seemed to see a fluctuation from decade to decade even though there were huge environmental changes that occurred. The reason behind this could lie in the fact that the products are the same now as they were then. Women are also still the same when it comes to who they look to for advice on buying products.

MESSAGES

HAIR CARE

Because of the older demographic having been the target of this magazine for a long time, the big ideas and messaging have not changed much for these ads. The idea that the everyday woman can have beautiful, nourished supermodel hair at a reasonable price is the
communication objective that most of the hair care brands have adopted. They pictured everyday women and imply that your hair can look just as great at a price that an everyday woman, such as the one pictured, can afford. Some examples of the headlines that are used to depict this communication objective are:

- “The salons look. It's the reason hairdressers choose Miss Clairol more often than any other hair color.” Clairol Hair Coloring (Ladies Home Journal, December 1985)
- "How to perm like the pros." Revlon (Ladies Home Journal, June 1985)
- "None of these women are hair models. After all, neither are you." Dove (Ladies Home Journal, June 2005)

The copy points that accompany these headlines usually have to do with salon looks at a reasonable price, use of salon quality products at an everyday price and use of quality hair care products without worrying about the price. The picture implies that these beautiful women spent a fortune on their hair care products and that that is why their hair looks great. Therefore, the copy serves to dispel what the picture implies that women can afford quality hair care products.

The other communication objective that the majority of hair care ads use is that their product can make you look like any woman you want to. This can mean everything from using your hair to make you look younger to using your hair to make you look like a completely different person. This communication objective was a different series of ads in the everyday user big idea category. Everyday women who look slightly older were used in these ads to imply that they use the product to cover their grey hair and that they look younger. Before and after pictures or implication of an after picture were used in the ads in which women were...
transforming their look. Examples of some of the headlines that are used to depict this communication objective are:

- "Wash that gray right outta your hair" Clairol (Ladies Home Journal, December 1980).
- "New Ultress lets you express your inner self. Or perhaps we should say selves" Ultress (Ladies Home Journal, December 1985).
- “You are looking at the reason professional colorists choose Miss Clairol more often than any other hair color” Clairol (Ladies Home Journal, June 1985).

The body copy in these ads contained very similar content as they focused on the nourishment that the hair coloring product gives to your hair even if you choose to dye your hair frequently and the confidence that you can gain through achieving a younger look.

It is clear through the hair care ads the demographics of Ladies Home Journal. Most of the ads had to do with hair coloring products, a category of products that older women are more likely to be interested in (especially the ads that had to do with covering grey hair). This use of the everyday user big idea is clearly effective because it hits women where they are the most vulnerable; by appealing to their social/belongingness and self esteem needs and more specifically their need for exhibition, or to be noticed. For older women this means highlighting and addressing the fact that women are getting older and changes can often be physically visible.

MAKEUP

The communication objective that was the most commonly used within the makeup category was that makeup enhances your natural beauty. This message was the same in the big ideas and throughout all of the decades; this communication objective did not vary. This was popular
in ads that used both celebrities and everyday users. Keeping the target audience in mind, older women tend to not overload makeup and prefer the natural look with finishing touches. Most advertisements took this communication objective and executed it by using either a celebrity or everyday woman, in their everyday setting, looking flawless with little to no makeup on. The idea of enhancing their natural beauty also speaks to a woman’s esteem needs, especially exhibition. Brands, like Cover Girl are not just selling products, but a lifestyle. Their tagline of “easy, breezy, beautiful Cover Girl” speaks to not just how the women look but rather the way that they live their lives. Headlines that were used to portray this included:

- "Every face Touch & Glow touches has everything beautiful going for it" (Ladies Home Journal, June 1970).

Other communication objectives and features of products that were seen among this product category were the idea of makeup being age defying and the fact that the makeup is long lasting (product performance messages). Ads that focused on the fact that they were age defying often featured a celebrity who was of an older generation (the same generation of the target audience) with a classic beauty. Again, this appeals to an older woman’s psychological needs as they still want to maintain their appearance and be recognized by others. Headlines were similar to

- "Don’t lie about your age. DEFY IT!” Revlon (Ladies Home Journal, June 1995).
- "Older? Or simply ageless? I know which one I’d choose!” Cover Girl (Ladies Home Journal, December, 2009).

The third most popular communication objective was to portray the product and long lasting and can make it through anything the user may encounter. These comprehension level
campaigns provide the target audience with what could be a differential benefit for them and may influence their decision to switch brands. Headlines similar to:

- "Dazzling color that lasts without feathering?" Coty (Ladies Home Journal, June 1985)
- "Makeup that can face anything." Maybelline (Ladies Home Journal, June 1990).

PERFUME

It is clear that the main communication objective that all advertisers of perfume focus on is sex appeal. This use of sex appeal is not only that it will make you smell beautiful but the implication that by using this perfume it will make you sexually desirable like the women in the images. The idea behind this is that it is not just about wearing the perfume but rather a lifestyle. The implication is that by making yourself beautiful in just this one way that it will spill over to all other areas of your life as well. Many of the headlines were similar to the following:

- "Sensual...not too far from innocence." Revlon (Ladies Home Journal, December 1975).
- "Anything is possible if you dare." Dare (Ladies Home Journal, December 1990)
- "Dangerously female fragrance." Ciara (Ladies Home Journal, December 1995)
- "Discover the first fragrance. Discover the woman in you." Halle Berry (Ladies Home Journal, December 2009)
These headlines all contain some aspect of a product that makes it appear to be sexy and clearly reflect the communication objective of sex appeal. These headlines also imply that sexy and beautiful go hand in hand with leading an interesting and exciting lifestyle.

Other headlines featured simply the name of the product. The names of the products are also fairly seductive in nature going along with the sex appeal theme. For example:

- “Jonture” Revlon (Ladies Home Journal, December 1980)

The body copy on perfume advertisements was very limited. No copy at all isn’t uncommon. Often the headline or image carries the weight of the message strategy. If there is body copy, then it usually describes the smell of the fragrance and how attractive the smell is through use of seductive and sexy adjectives. If the copy is present it also serves to further expand on the idea that the fragrance is part of a beautiful, sexy and exciting lifestyle. Also common for perfume ads was using the copy or underline (sub headline) to highlight and introduce a new product or product line. Along with little body copy, there was often no action objective.

The communication objective of product most used in the perfume category was also sex appeal. Perfume ads were the only ads that seemed to be inconsistent with the readers’ demographics and the editorial content in the magazine. They included much younger, sexy women and celebrities who didn’t seem to fit the profile of women who the demographic would be influenced by. These ads were also the only ads that a consumer would consider sexy or racy and this was very inconsistent with the rest of the content featured in Ladies Home Journal. This was especially out of place in the recent years. There was a trend in older content in the magazine as a whole. Women appearing in articles and ads were older, as well as the articles
more directed to appeal to older women. Also, women in the magazine tended to be portrayed as everyday women or a woman in her working environment rather than as a celebrity or model. It is clear that these perfume brands were playing to the need that women have to establish and maintain their sexuality. It also plays to the exhibition need as the ads portray women as people that you would notice walking down the street, and being noticed may be a desire of the target audience of *Ladies Home Journal*.

**PERSONAL HYGIENE**

The most common communication objective that was used to develop the personal hygiene category was that the products give women the ability to take control of their lives even when they are feeling the most vulnerable. This like the other categories was seen through all four decades. For example, feminine hygiene products use the idea that the product provides the best protection, which will make women feel more confident and give them the ability to take on even the toughest tasks. Ads in this product category also highlight the fact that the product is extremely effective in keeping you dry and/or feeling clean and fresh all day long especially when compared to other competitors. This communication objective was found in nearly all the products, toothpaste and deodorant included.

The headlines of these advertisements highlighted both the message of assurance and some benefit of the product. These included:

- "I'm sure." Sure (*Ladies Home Journal*, December 1975),
- "Today I switched for comfort." Sure and Natural (*Ladies Home Journal*, December 1980),
- "Have you been putting with up this kind of wetness? Now you can have this kind of dryness. Always." Always (*Ladies Home Journal*, December 1980) and

The copy in these ads generally described how this product provided you with one less thing that you had to worry about during your already stressful day, kept you drier, was redesigned for maximum comfort and effectiveness, that no other product is more effective, and that these products were specifically designed for a woman. The one main messaging change in these ads was that the stressors changed. In the 70s the stresses were more related to being a mother and managing a house hold when in the 1990s and 2000s it was more related to career stress.

SKIN CARE

The main communication objectives in the skin care category were the ability of a product to give a woman's skin younger looking “healthy glow” or the effectiveness of the product in either providing protection or making skin smooth. Aspects of the product that were highlighted were the ability of a product to repair skin, provide UVA protection, provide refreshingly skin smooth, healthy young glow, that it was clinically proven/dermatologist recommended and that the product wasn't flashy, just plain, simple and effective. The main communication objectives were consistent throughout the four decades with the exception of highlighting UVA protection. Protection, along with the other communication objectives, was common throughout but it wasn't until recent years that it took on the task of the UVA protection. This message about providing UVA protection was only seen in the 2000s and increasing into recent years.

Common headlines for this category were generally along the lines of:

• "Beautiful skin. Beautifully simple." Buf Puf (Ladies Home Journal, June 1980),
• "This is the face I want to show the world." Maybelline (Ladies Home Journal, June 1985)
• "A lot of women say they have sensitive skin. This is for the 20% of woman who actually do." Dove (Ladies Home Journal, June 1995).
• "70% more moisture. 0% dry skin." Vaseline (Ladies Home Journal, December 2005),
• "Outsmart aging" Cover Girl (Ladies Home Journal, June 2009),
• "Would you trust this touch to just any deodorant bar soap? Dove (Ladies Home Journal, June 2009),

These headlines all reflect the communication objectives and the specific product benefits that advertisers were trying to highlight. The copy points reflected the same type of sentiments that the headlines did, with many referring to dermatologists or other experts in the skin care field to reinforce the fact that it was supported by scientific evidence. These ads were generally simple and highlighted best benefits that the product provides.

As seen in the examples for all product categories, the same messages are used decade after decade. While women have come a long way in the past four decades as far as women’s rights and gaining status in the work place, the messages that are contained in most of these ads is still that these products make women look better, younger, slim, and well kept even as the younger generation cares less about their looks than their older counterparts. Therefore, these messages aren’t truly reflecting the sentiment and cultural changes that are occurring, making the ads in these categories not a reflection of the culture today. The reason could lie in that these products haven’t changed enough in the past 40 years to have any other messages to say. While there have been scientific evidence advances in certain products, such as age defying makeup, advertisers haven’t taken to using these advances in their product advertising. Also, a significant portion of the target audience of this magazine is the older generation of women who still truly do care about how the look. This is their culture, and therefore a reflection of how they see themselves. Perhaps this is only the approach they took in
Ladies Home Journal and in a younger demographic magazine they had a different approach. This however, does not bode well for the advertisers as this demographic is not reading the magazine at this time. This could be good for Ladies Home Journal in that a young women walking by a news stand flipping through the magazines may happen to come across an ad that is targeted to her, and in turn by the magazine thinking that it is targeted towards her.

THEMES AND TRENDS

Throughout the healthy and beauty category there were several themes that were consistent throughout all product subcategories and throughout the big ideas as well. These trends have to do with common aspects of products featured, and ad size. Regardless of the decade and the environmental factors at play, those big ideas remained virtually unchanged.

DECADES

The different product categories have had some interesting trends in the past four decades. The number of hair care ads has been decreasing at a steady rate over the past four decades. In the 1970s, Ladies Home Journal featured many more hair care products other than shampoo and styling products. In recent years, shampoo, hair color, hair spray and styling products were more likely to be featured than the curlers, and blow dryers that were the focal points of many 1970s ads. This change is consistent with the trend in women preferring easier, more manageable hair styles. Also, most women if they do get their hair done will most likely go to a salon for the more difficult hair dos, for example a perm. Also, hair care appliances seem to not be as popular today as they were back in the 1970s. With these changes, there the number of hair care ads in the magazine as a whole has decreased. In the 1970s there were 16 total pages of hair care ads while in the 2000s there were only 7 total pages of hair care ads. This is a 56% decrease in the number of ads featured over the four decades.
Makeup ads appeared more intensively over the course of the 1990s than any other
decade. Ads in this category were two times more prevalent in the 90s than they were in the 70s
and 80s. From decade to decade it wasn't only the appearance of more ads; it was also the
appearance of different types of product ads. In the 70s a lot of the advertisements in the
makeup category were for products that you used to apply makeup. For example, this would be
mirrors that gave you the ability to change the lighting to apply your makeup that would match
the setting the woman would experience during that day, rather than the ads of the 2000s which
feature woman after having already applied the makeup.

The perfume category differed most from the rest of the product categories. While it was
very similar to the makeup category in that it had nearly twice as many ads in the 90s as it did in
any other decade it was very different from the other categories in nearly every other respect
when it came to messaging and big idea strategies. This could be because of the fact that the
decision to buy perfume is probably the fairly low level price involvement decision for the
demographic and that it plays to not only esteem needs but belongingness needs as well.
Perfume is not an expensive investment and is also not something that is necessarily noticeable
(if it is not too strong or out of place) to the extent that a woman’s hair and makeup are. Another
reason behind this could be that the benefits of perfume are fairly elusive. Perfume is a product
with no real functional benefit and therefore the creative approach needs to address this and
take a different angle—provide a psychological benefit—than most of the other products in the
study.

The numbers of personal hygiene ads remained fairly constant from 1970 to 1990 and
then dropped in half in the 2000s. One reason behind this is because it seemed that there was a
drop in the number of ads that were focused on tooth care and medical hygiene issues. The
only ads that appeared in the 2000s were feminine hygiene product ads.
Skin care ads were extremely frequent during the 2000s. This is perhaps because of the increasing emphasis in the last decade on exposure to the sun and its harmful effects. Also, again in recent years there seems to be this desire among women to look and feel young, especially with the celebrities and other famous people that are seen in the media. While celebrities have always captured our attention with the new media outlets that are available they have become everyday figures in our lives. Because of this “the look like a celebrity” phenomenon has taken off to reflect the environmental changes in our society.

ASPECTS OF PRODUCTS FEATURED

A trend in the hair care category was that the most common aspects of the products that the ad’s message focused on were the quality of the product, the effectiveness of both coloring and nourishment of your hair, and the effectiveness of achieving the look that you want to achieve by coloring your hair. This was used for 26 of the 48 hair care ads. The image portrayed of the product was often that it made hair appear beautiful because of the color as well as the nourishment that it gave to your hair. This again only reinforces the product guarantee big idea.

The most common aspects of the product featured in the makeup ads were also quality and effectiveness; this was use for 20 of the 36 total ads in this category. Effectiveness meant different things for different products though, as it frequently meant that it was good at decreasing the effects of age, long lasting or provided a smooth and flawless finish. The older demographic of women have most likely been using makeup products for a long time, and therefore, have brands that are already in their evoked set. In order to break into this set, new brands need to provide them with a differential benefit that they aren’t already getting from their traditional makeup products. By emphasizing quality and using comprehension and conviction campaigns, these brands may have a better chance of getting into the evoked set if the consumer happens to have a bad experience with the makeup product that they traditionally use.
Another great way to do this is to influence them by choosing celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres (Ladies Home Journal, December 2009), who is popular among women of this demographic.

The perfume brands that advertised in Ladies Home Journal seemed to take an extremely interesting approach when it came to the aspect of the product that was featured. These ads tended to feature that the product was associated with a celebrity or describe the scent itself or featured no aspect of the product other than that it increased sex appeal. Over the four decades the perfume advertisements did not change much and it is therefore hard to make a determination if these ads really were effective in Ladies Home Journal since these ads were the exception rather than the norm in this type of magazine. It felt as though these perfume ads were better placed in a Cosmopolitan-type of magazine where the demographic was younger and where the sexy advertisements are the norm.

The personal hygiene category was broad in that it incorporated everything from deodorant to feminine hygiene products to razors; products that dealt with more sensitive issues. Because of this, these ads compared to the other product categories tended to be less eye-catching and blended into the content of the magazine more so than any other ad category. Perhaps this was because many of the subjects that were addressed in these ads were more personal and embarrassing to talk about than hair care or skin care products. The ads were more discreet in the 1970s and 1980s compared to the more recent advertisements which tended to address issues head on no matter what the topic was. While the visual of the ads and format of the ads tended to be discreet, the headlines were anything but discreet. The headlines tended to shout the benefits of the product, even if the ad was for a pregnancy test. This blatant approach works much better in recent years because our society has become much more open and subjects that were once taboo in the 1970s are now politically correct to talk about in public in the 2000s. The pregnancy tests are the perfect example of one such topic.
Skin care was one of the most frequently advertised categories in *Ladies Home Journal*. While this was a large category, the execution of these ads remained fairly parallel throughout all four decades with the exception of the trend that the ads in December issue were dramatically different than those appearing in the June issue. These different issues featured totally different aspects of the products. December advertisements tended to focus on the idea of reducing dry skin, while advertisements in June were more focused on UVA/sunscreen protection and touchable skin for the summer. While this shift in messaging is understandable given the seasons, this wasn't a trend seen in any of the other ad categories where product performance could also be affected by seasonality (e.g., hair care). Simplicity was also a trend in the skin care category and is very effective as many women prefer the simple, natural product especially with the increase in the green movement. Ads using the simplistic approach made the skin care ads distinct and easy to pick out from the rest of the advertisements in the magazine and gave these products a very unique selling point in that they positioned themselves through their differential benefits.

One aspect of the products that was featured in all product categories and nearly all ads analyzed that the products helped to produce beautiful women, who in turn also had beautiful hair, skin or sex appeal depending on the product. This theme was aimed at attracting women because of the women pictured in their advertisements and seemed to be effective for the simple reason that many women strive to look like the beautiful women who are featured in advertisements and other mediums as well. The idea of "beautify yourself" and "always look your best" messages have not changed in these product categories even though women today tend to be much more relaxed and casual when it comes to beauty and how they look than in the 1970s.

**RESULTS**

**Hair Care Products**
Figure 10- hair care % within Big Idea
n=48

1- Celebrity endorser
2- comparative
3- everyday user
4- expert endorser
5- product demo
6- product guarantee
7- promotion
8- scientific evidence
9- user endorser

Figure 11- action objectives in hair care
n=48

NO

YES
Figure 12 - size of hair care ads
n=48

Figure 13 - makeup % within Big Idea
n=36

1- Celebrity endorser
2- comparative
3- everyday user
4- expert endorser
5- product demo
6- product guarantee
7- promotion
8- scientific evidence
9- user endorser
Figure 14- action objectives in makeup
n=36

YES

NO
Perfume

Figure 15 - size of makeup ads
n=36

Figure 16 - perfume % within Big Idea
n=36

1- Celebrity endorser
2- comparative
3- everyday user
4- expert endorser
5- product demo
6- product guarantee
7- promotion
8- scientific evidence
9- user endorser
Figure 17 - action objectives in perfume
n=36

Figure 18 - size of perfume ads
n=36
Personal Hygiene

**Figure 19 - personal hygiene % within Big Idea**

- **n=63**

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- 1- Celebrity endorser
- 2- comparative
- 3- everyday user
- 4- expert endorser
- 5- product demo
- 6- product guarantee
- 7- promotion
- 8- scientific evidence
- 9- user endorser

**Figure 20 - personal hygiene % within Action Objective**

- **n=63**

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Skin Care Products

Figure 21- personal hygiene % within Size of Ad
n=63

Figure 22- skin care % within Big Idea
n=80

1- Celebrity endorser
2- comparative
3- everyday user
4- expert endorser
5- product demo
6- product guarantee
7- promotion
8- scientific evidence
9- user endorser
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear to see after thorough analysis of each of the different subcategories in the health and beauty product arena that advertising in each category uses the big ideas in different ways and that the messaging used in these ads has not dramatically changed over the past 40 years. Because there is not much difference it is hard to say if the dominant approaches stayed consistent because they were effective or if there is another approach that may be more effective. It could also be said that if they weren’t working then they would have been changed a long time ago. An in-depth look back to ads in the past may provide the answer to this question.

Another factor that has affected the evolution of advertising strategy in the health and beauty category is that fact that the product categories are virtually the same today as they were in the 1970s. This has meant that the advertising did not have to change as women know the products, the benefits they provide, and the brands they can trust. But at the same time by not changing or mixing up their approach advertisers may not be doing all they can’t to gain the attention of the consumer or build interest in their product and will have a hard time attracting new consumers to their product.

A third reason why these advertisements may not have changed is that the ideas that were used decades ago were so “important and powerful that they were able to last for decades, surviving turnovers in client management, agency relationships and the ever-changing behavior of consumers” (pg. 16, Greenberg). It is often said that in advertising there is never a truly new idea, and in the 263 ads that this study looked at, that was certainly the case. By not using the big idea of telling first person stories, advertisers didn’t get caught up in chasing stories and have been able to use the same ideas over and over, altering the ad only by writing new engaging headlines and copy and using updated images while still remain true to their target audience. The exception to this was the everyday user and the user endorser. The difference,
and the reason why these ideas have been successful and been able to continue, is because they use the classic everyday woman whose story is always one that women can relate to, no matter what the decade. Therefore, while these ads are not chasing new stories, they are continually using the same story, the same woman who will always be effective for this demographic.

While it is uncertain if these big ideas, themes and messages are effective for health and beauty products, there are some ways that the advertisers could change their strategy and know if what they are doing is effective. One way to make it more effective is to stick more strictly to the AIDA approach. This means attracting the attention of the consumer by using a new and different big idea, keeping their interest by using a benefit or another aspect of the product that they are looking for or which they may not know exists, and inspire desire to purchase the product by making connections between the product and target audiences life and finally asking for an action to be taken. Another option would be to choose a different unique selling point (USP) that would truly separate and differentiate the product from others within the product category. This however, doesn't necessarily mean that the big idea has to change, it just means that the need to continually come up with new and interesting twists to executing the desired or appropriate big idea. For example, this could mean using a popular celebrity who may be out of the ordinary as an endorser for the product category but is still in the aspirational reference group of many woman in the target audience. This is what Cover Girl has done in its recent choice of Ellen Degeneris. Ellen, who more often dresses in more casual, unisex attire, is not the typical glamorous choice for make-up ads. But she is the right age and she has a tremendous following for her stand-up comedy, her talk show, and, more recently, her stint as judge on American Idol. This is much different than the approach that Cover Girl took with endorser Drew Barrymore, who is more know for her glamorous looks that humor.
Another way to make health and beauty ads more effective is through the use of an integrated campaign. The biggest problem seen today with integrated campaigns is that the interactive and traditional media sides often have a different perspective on what the big idea is. By aligning these ideas and getting the entire agency on the same page, there is the possibility of creating some extremely interesting campaigns that could continually reinforce the communication objectives that they are trying to get across. One recent study shows that 73% of people read a magazine while watching TV and another 14% read magazines while surfing the Internet (pg. 34, “Consumers less likely to trust web ads: MPA”). Combining both these mediums could provide an interesting response, especially seeing as a study recently found that “magazines and the Internet…are considered good sources of personal and relevant information for consumer” (pg. 34, Diaz).

In conclusion, this study found that while overall the big ideas and strategies have not significantly changed in the health and beauty category from 1970 to 2009, it did find that there were some notable differences in the product subcategories within the health and beauty category. While advertisers used similar big ideas and strategies, the execution was significantly different from subcategory to subcategory, even though the reasoning behind it was similar. The fact that there was very little change in the advertising strategies is even more interesting when putting the magazine ads in context with all that has happened for and to women in the past forty years. While women have made extraordinary ground in gaining rights, becoming equal in the workplace, and even becoming primary wage earners in their households, the advertising does not reflect these cultural changes at all. Perhaps a look into not only the history of big ideas but into how culture plays or doesn’t play a role in advertising in women’s magazines is the next step.
REFERENCES


Diaz, Ann Christine. “Consumers less likely to trust Web ads: MPA.” Advertising Age; 03/20/2000, Vol. 71 Issue 12, pg. 34.


