

People Like Us?

REPRESENTATION IN ADVERTISING

Contents

- ***Topic outline***
- ***Why is there so much advertising in the media?***
- ***Who advertises and why?***
- ***How does representation in advertising reflect or influence our attitudes?***
- ***How do advertisers identify their audience?***
- ***How is representation monitored and regulated?***
- ***Gender and Role Stereotyping: Images of men, women and families***
- ***Sexism in advertising***
- ***Representing idealised beauty and body shape***
- ***Representing cultural identity***
- ***Representing different age groups***
- ***Representing disability***
- ***Classroom activities***

Topic Outline

The accurate portrayal of people is a constant challenge to advertisers, especially if it is to reflect the diversity of our society. Advertisers have to respond to ever-changing social, moral and cultural attitudes as well as new developments in advertising regulation.

This resource provides a selective overview of human representation in British advertising with real examples and case studies to show how images, language and production styles have been applied in different ways since the 1970s and how stereotypical concepts of gender, age, cultural group or class identities have been used or avoided. Images, links to TV commercials (viewable via [HAT's website](#)) and notes are also supplied as a basis for classroom discussion with a range of suggested activities.

Why is there so much advertising in the media?

Advertising can be seen and heard throughout the media; in newspapers, magazines, commercial radio, television, cinema, the Internet and digital tele-communications. Its messages are reinforced on poster billboards, desk computers and mobile devices, shop and supermarket displays, public transport and through sponsorship, sales promotion and direct marketing. Integrated advertising campaigns can cross boundaries and use multiple media platforms.

Advertising not only benefits the advertisers of the goods and services it promotes but it also provides the essential regular income revenue that media operators need to fund the quantity and quality of their programmes and editorial. Advertising funds 75% of commercial television, 95% of national press, 80% of magazines and 95% of commercial radio. With the increasing use of the Internet for music, entertainment and shopping as well as communications by email and smart phones, e-media advertising expenditure is now greater than any other category. The advertising industry generates £7.8 billion of annual GVA (gross value added) to the British economy and is the third largest section of the UK's creative industries.

Ref: *The Contribution of the Advertising Industry to the UK Economy: A Creative Industries Report* (The Work Foundation on behalf of Credos/Advertising Association, November 2011).
http://www.theworkfoundation.com/DownloadPublication/Report/295_The%20contribution%20of%20advertising%20to%20the%20UK%20economy%20311011.pdf

Who advertises and why?

An advertisement is a paid-for marketing message, or communication, with a definite objective to inform or influence a number of people for a particular purpose. It conveys information from an owner or producer of a brand, product or service to potential customers or users through one or several media channels.

From the smallest classified ad in the column of a local newspaper to multi-media global campaigns, advertising offers choices about everything people may need or desire according to their lifestyles and aspirations. Advertisements are useful for raising awareness about new products, fashions, inventions and technologies, public health and safety issues, jobs and career opportunities, sport and entertainment events, public transport services, human and citizen's rights, political parties and religious movements.

Although brands mainly advertise to increase sales of their commercial products, advertising can also help to rally support for good causes and charitable fundraising. Increasingly, more sophisticated online promotions, competitions and mobile device apps are being developed to encourage followers to actively engage with a brand or organisation, and thereby maintain, and potentially extend, customer loyalty.

Advertising, however, is ONLY ONE important way of influencing and informing people. Advertisers well understand that there are many other factors which affect the way in which people are informed, influenced or persuaded to take some action or to think in a certain way.

How does representation in advertising reflect or influence our attitudes?

Advertisements portray people in a wide variety of ways as part of the persuasion process. Advertising effectiveness is measured by the extent these marketing communications can attract the attention, and increase the numbers, of customers in order to justify the financial investment.

Imaginary or realistic narratives and scenarios can be created that reflect needs or ideas that potential consumers can easily identify with. Advertisers can choose to represent people and situations truthfully and realistically or by conforming to conventional and idealised ideas about human physical attractiveness, types of behaviour or lifestyles so that they become almost caricatures.

One particular character type can be used to appeal to a mass audience made up of different types of people; for example, glamorous models or actors of a standardised ideal physique.

This can create STEREOTYPES; easily recognisable characters that can convey marketing messages simply and quickly. Many advertisers these days strive to be inclusive, to portray and describe people realistically and to show the diversity present in our society. The task involves addressing the needs and interests of many sections of the population according to any one, or a combination of, the following:

- Gender/sexuality
- Role within the family
- Age (e.g. child, youth, adult, pensioner)
- Class or income status in society
- Cultural diversity
- Local, regional or national identity
- Disability
- Advertiser's classifications of specialist interests e.g. music, motoring, gardening etc.

The way advertisers approach this task has changed over time in accordance with evolving social and cultural as well as regulatory developments in society. You will observe within this resource how advertisements from different decades reveal how important a barometer of social attitudes, aspirations, fashions and trends they are, providing insights and commentaries about the times and cultures that have generated them.

How do advertisers identify their AUDIENCE?

Through continuous MARKET RESEARCH, the use of focus groups and the study of social and economic trends, advertisers seek to keep up to date with changing perceptions about different TARGET GROUPS and their behaviours so as to appeal to their desires and needs. However, the advertisers are also aware that the images and ideas that advertisements create may, in turn, also play a part in reinforcing these perceptions.

Advertisers can commission specific consumer research surveys privately or they can share published research with a syndicate. They can also go into partnership with another brand that has already successfully tapped into a market they have identified and wish to break into.

An advertising campaign can be pre-tested and evaluated to assess potential consumer response and feedback by referring it to specially selected and recruited consumer panels.

It can be post-tested by tracking consumer buying behaviour. The growth of Internet shopping has made it much easier for online retailers to monitor the profile of their customers and obtain direct feedback from them.

CASE STUDY:

[Marketing To A Target group: NIVEA for men](#)

How is representation monitored and regulated?

The UK advertising industry is highly self-regulated. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) was established in 1962 to make sure all advertisements are honest, truthful and decent.

The strength of the self-regulatory system lies in both the independence of the ASA and the support and commitment of the advertising industry, through the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), to maintaining the high standards laid down in the Advertising Codes, which are designed to protect consumers and create a level playing field for advertisers.

It is independent of both the Government and the advertising industry but it is recognised by the Government, the courts and other regulators such as the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) and Ofcom as the body to deal with complaints about advertising. Its work includes acting on and investigating complaints as well as proactively monitoring and taking action against misleading, harmful or offensive advertisements, sales promotions and direct marketing.

Just one complaint can lead to an ad being withdrawn and the ASA has made sure the complaints procedure is as quick and easy as possible. If it upholds a complaint about an ad, the advertiser must withdraw or amend the ad and not use the advertising approach again.

ASA aims to resolve complaints as soon as possible and strives to ensure a healthy working relationship with advertisers and media owners.

The ASA works with the [Committee of Advertising Practice](#) to educate and train advertisers on the rules to help prevent problem ads from appearing in the first place.

The ASA has strict rules about misleading the public through the digital manipulation, enhancement or airbrushing of images of people in advertisements. Such images can create a degree of perfection which is unattainable in reality.

Ref: [ASA Hot Topics Health & Beauty](#)

ADVERTISING REGULATION CASE STUDY:

Teint Miracle cosmetic face foundation by L’Oreal (UK) Ltd t/a Lancôme

In 2011 a two page magazine advertisement for *Teint Miracle* featured an image of American film actress Julia Roberts. Jo Swinson MP challenged it was misleading because she believed the flawless skin in the image was a result of digital manipulation, not the use of the product. The ASA ruled that the advertisement breached its code for exaggeration and being misleading and banned it from future publication. Jo Swinson was a co-founder of the [Campaign for Body Confidence](#) which aimed to eradicate media pressure on consumers to conform to impossible body image stereotypes.

Ref:

1. [www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/L’Oreal \(UK\) Ltd](http://www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/L'Oreal%20(UK)%20Ltd)

2. www.mediasmart.org.uk/resources-body-image



Left: The real Julia Roberts in 2011

Questions to discuss:

- Should advertisers only use models of a certain body shape, skin colour or age?
- What affect does this have on society's perception of beauty?
- Should image alteration be used as a technique in media images?
- Should advertisers be required to use truthfully representative models in advertising?
- What might be the positive and negative impacts of this technique?

Activity:

Write a letter to *The Guardian* either complaining about or praising, how a person is represented in a particular advertisement. Students can choose a contemporary example as a member of the public or an example from the past and write as if they were a contemporary commentator living at that time.

Gender and Role Stereotyping: Images of men, women and families

Long established views on traditional roles within the family or society have been used by western advertisers to reach their TARGET AUDIENCE for many types of products.

This especially relates to the promotion of household detergents and appliances as there has been a general perception that women do most of the shopping and cleaning within the home. In today's world, this creates a dilemma for advertisers that do not wish to appear patronising to women or to suggest this is solely the women's role.

The family has been STEREOTYPED as the two-parent, two-child unit when in fact the society we live in accepts many combinations and alternatives. For example, single parents, either male or female, as well as older and younger generations within the extended family now regularly appear in advertisements.

In the following eight examples of TV commercials for Persil soap products, dating from the 1970s to the 2000s, you can observe how the brand has represented perceived changing social patterns within the family in order to maintain and extend interest in their product. As you watch these, observe the different roles of men, women, children and grandparents.

1. Brand: Persil

Title: Toughness

Date: 1977

Agency: J Walter Thompson

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/178c1445-dfca-43df-a514-6dd545e12fd8>

2. Brand: Persil

Title: Mini Dress Rehearsal

Date: 1979

Agency: J Walter Thompson

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/86322642-4cb6-44ba-beaa-e8397bb647f8>

3. Brand: Persil automatic soap powder

Title: Out on the Street

Date: 1987

Agency: J Walter Thompson

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/54122469-7a56-4012-a871-65b14f017112>

4. Brand: Persil
Title: At Home with Dad
Date: 1990-1991
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/e735d0a3-a6a7-4eb6-975e-9397f2d582ac>

5. Brand: Persil washing up liquid
Title: Hard Working Gran
Date: 1992
Agency: J Walter Thompson
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/13d427c8-e5da-4fba-93df-bf8c227cfafe>

6. Brand: Persil
Title: Chariots of Power
Date: 1996
Agency: J Walter Thomson
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/aa1f9ef7-942c-4cfb-91d0-667922fd1d3f>

7. Brand: Persil Non-Bio
Title: Eyeliner
Date: 1998
Agency: J Walter Thompson
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/56e7df07-6882-423d-994b-a1a73b85c2b0>

8. Brand: Persil Gel tablets
Title: Blaze of Glory
Date: 2007
Agency: BBH
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/15929124-c56c-475c-8fb5-d8c5739bfb91>

Sexism in advertising

This can be defined as stereotyping, patronising or other offensive or discriminatory behaviour towards women or men. The use of gratuitous sexual representation in advertising can be offensive, especially if used in bad taste, if it lowers a person's dignity or if it inappropriate to the product or audience it is directed at. An advertisement can be called "sexist" when the use of sex is completely irrelevant to the advertised product. Sexual innuendo in the text can also be considered offensive.

In a recent published research report the ASA found that religious groups have expressed concern about how western culture sexualises images of women to sell products. Many dislike the idea that by using a particular product a man can have instantaneous success with the opposite sex, as they think this says more about the behaviour of women than about the product being advertised.

Concerns about the portrayal of men were found to be different. Some found advertisements offensive that made men look stupid or humiliated them. Others found socially unacceptable conduct by men being presented as the norm, such as "laddish" or immature behaviour, damaging and offensive.

In the general public survey, sexism about women was a much more common reason for being offended by an advertisement. Around one in five (19%) of those who had been offended cited sexism about women, compared with just 1% who cited sexism about men.

Ref: *Public Perceptions of Harm and Offence in UK Advertising* (Ipsos Mori/ASA, 2012)
https://www.asa.org.uk/~/_/media/Files/ASA/Misc/ASAHarmOffenceReport.ashx

Example 1

This advertisement for TEAC professional digital audio system appeared in *Maxim* magazine in January 2002. This magazine is an international publication based in the UK and targeted at heterosexual adult males.

The advertisement features a woman in a white bikini top and bottom, showing her midsection. She is holding a wooden tray filled with various lipsticks. The lipsticks are arranged in a row, and their colors range from dark to light. The text "Seriously Well Equipped" is written in white on the left side of the image. Below this text, there are two columns of text. The first column reads: "The New TEAC Reference 350 and 550 series. Advanced digital technology served up in a range of beautiful mini components, individually styled and each one an audiophile separate in its own right." The second column reads: "Although diminutive in size, TEAC's powerful and seriously well equipped Reference 350 and 550 will provide the centre stage of your home theatre experience with ease." On the right side of the image, there are two stacks of audio equipment. The top stack is labeled "Reference 350" and the bottom stack is labeled "Reference 550". At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a blue banner with the text "The new TEAC Reference 350 and 550 Series". Below the banner, the TEAC logo is displayed, along with the website "www.teac.co.uk" and the phone number "Call TEAC on 01923 819630 for more information".

Seriously Well Equipped

The New TEAC Reference 350 and 550 series. Advanced digital technology served up in a range of beautiful mini components, individually styled and each one an audiophile separate in its own right.

Although diminutive in size, TEAC's powerful and seriously well equipped Reference 350 and 550 will provide the centre stage of your home theatre experience with ease.

Reference 350

Reference 550

The new TEAC Reference 350 and 550 Series

TEAC

www.teac.co.uk

Call TEAC on 01923 819630 for more information

Questions to discuss:

- What is the relevance of the female represented and her range of cosmetics to the digital audio equipment being advertised?
- Why do you think TEAC has presented its product like this?
- What proportion of the advertisement displays the actual audio equipment for sale?
- What are the connotations of the text "Seriously Well Equipped"?
- Can this ad be described as "sexist"?
- Do you think it is acceptable to represent a woman in this way, even if it is inside a magazine aimed at male readers?

Example 2

Brand: Renault Megane

Date: 2007

Title: Shake it

Agency: Publicis

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/cea60b70-bfb2-4e5a-a37b-5a03d7140786>

This commercial makes reference to the rather dated sexist idea of using beautiful female models to promote new cars. Car manufacturers today generally recognise that women are also potential customers with their own buying power. This scenario seemingly attempts to make the genders more equal. The Megane car's unique rear shape is emphasised and made memorable by showing every type of shaking posterior, both male and female, along with a sassy music soundtrack.

Questions to discuss:

- What does this ad want to convey about the values of the car brand?
- Is the proportion of time the camera spends on men's and women's posteriors completely equal?
- Are there differences in the way the men and the women are dressed or portrayed?

Example 3

Brand: Virgin Atlantic Airways

British Television Advertising Awards, gold award winner 2011

Title: It

Agency: RKCR Y & R

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/327a4c54-5e38-4861-bd23-873deb9438e5>

Using actors against a background of computerised images with big production values, this commercial parodies gender stereotypes with a certain tongue in the cheek. Inspired by the iconic 1960s and 1970s title sequences from James Bond movies of the period, and with its provocative slogan "Your airline's either got it or it hasn't", the viewer is taken on a flight through a surreal and glamorous world but is brought down to earth at the end.

Questions to discuss:

- Although this appears to be a parody of sexist attitudes from an earlier era, how does the advertiser manage to portray these characters without causing offence today?
- How does the music soundtrack by Muse contribute to the mood of the commercial?
- What type and age-group of audience is this commercial aimed at?

Representing idealised beauty and body shape

The beauty industry has long wrestled with a contradiction at the heart of its imagery and communication. Research has shown that women simultaneously criticise, yet traditionally cling to images of female perfection. In 2003 it was demonstrated that 72% of women felt worse about themselves after reading a woman's magazine as the images of perfection they craved were undermining their self-esteem. The following case study shows how Unilever's Dove brand has successfully connected with women of all shapes, sizes, ages and races by portraying women more realistically throughout its advertising and marketing programme.

CASE STUDY:

Challenging the Beauty Myth: *Dove's Big Idea: From real curves to growth curves* 2008

(Reproduced with the permission of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and Warc.com. Further case studies can be purchased directly from www.ipa.co.uk/effectiveness/case-studies)

Insert link to PDF of IPA case study: *Real Beauty Campaign - Dove 2008*

See also ADVERTISING REGULATION CASE STUDY under [How is representation monitored and regulated?](#)

(Make this into a digital link to take reader straight there).

Representing cultural identity

Cultural groups can be portrayed in advertisements in stereotypical ways.

Here are two examples of stereotypical portrayals of Italian and Welsh identities:

Example 1

Brand: Dolmio pasta sauce (Master foods)

Title: Lesson Numero Uno

Date: 1996-1997

Agency: DMB & B

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/ce5dc985-a4da-4a7a-b80b-9bcfbcb270c7>

Questions to discuss:

- As Dolmio pasta sauce is manufactured in Holland, why is a strong Italian association so important to this brand?
- Which social classes or lifestyles does this commercial represent? Why and how are they shown?
- Who is the target audience?

Example 2

Brand: Pot Noodle

Title: Noodle Mine

Date: 2007

Agency: Mother

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/14fef5a7-3b47-4018-a67d-b02e7b397a31>

Questions to discuss:

- Do you think that some Welsh people might find this commercial offensive?
- Who else could be offended and why?
- To what type of audience is Pot Noodle appealing here and to which target age group?

Example 3

Brand: Vaseline

Title: Sea

Date: 2007

Agency: BBH NYC


<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/fb110bc9-1dcb-4c66-9c1c-1e7d9a7658b5>

Here Vaseline takes a more universal approach to human representation and mixed genders, races and ages take part in this epic.

Questions to discuss:

- What brand values are conveyed by this treatment?
- To whom do they appeal?

Example 4



**ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF POLICE PREJUDICE?
OR ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF YOURS?**

Do you see a policeman chasing a criminal? Or a policeman harassing an innocent person? Wrong both times. It's two police officers, one in plain clothes, chasing a third party. And it's a good illustration of why we are looking for more recruits from ethnic minorities. **Photograph by Don McCullin**

PHOTO: DON McCullin. With the subtle irony of a realist, he captures the chase in a moment of time. The officer in plain clothes is chasing a man in a light-colored jacket and jeans. The man is running away from the officer. The officer is on the left, leaning forward in a chase, while the man is on the right, running away. The background shows a wall with graffiti and a trash bin.

Advertiser: Metropolitan police recruitment

Title: Another example of Police prejudice?

Date: 1998

Agency: Collett Dickenson Pearce (CDP)

Intending to increase its attractiveness as a career option to people from ethnic minorities, this press campaign used photojournalist Don McCullin to give the pictures an edge of realism to show the job of policemen realistically.

This advertisement confronts the reader with the assumptions they may wrongly make about the man in front of the policemen. It explains:

"Do you see a policeman chasing a criminal? Or a policeman harassing an innocent person? Wrong both times. It's two police officers, one in plain clothes, chasing a third party. And it's a good illustration of why we are looking for more recruits from ethnic minorities."

Representing different age groups

Children

Advertisements addressed to, targeted directly at or featuring children are highly regulated by the ASA. Its strict rules dictate that ads should not contain anything that is likely to result in their physical, mental or moral harm. The Advertising Codes define a child as anyone under the age of 16 years. The ASA website provides a full background briefing on the issue:

Ref: www.asa.org.uk/News-resources/Hot-Topics/Children-and-advertising

See also: www.parentport.org.uk/, a website run by the UK's media regulators.

Even today, from babyhood children are stereotyped by the colour and style of their clothes or other products they use e.g. blue for a boy, pink for a girl. Parents can reinforce stereotyping their children by offering boys and girls completely different types of toys to play with or by encouraging particular pursuits or hobbies.

During the 1980s and 1990s Oliviero Toscani steered a new style of poster and press campaign for Benetton clothing ranges. He believed that it was not necessary to show the products in the advertisements as the company had 7,000 stores around the world to display them. Instead, the advertising budget was used to talk to people and communicate real life issues, challenging the view that real life is only acceptable in advertising if it is sanitised.



Not only are these children not wearing any Benetton clothes, this 1991 poster demonstrated that all tongues are the same colour. However, it was deemed pornographic in Arab countries where sticking out one's tongue is considered to be an extremely rude gesture.



This Benetton campaign poster of 1991 broke taboos of taste and decency with this image of a new born baby which is impossible to ignore. It was banned in the USA and UK at the time but probably would be tolerated today. Whilst Benetton claimed the poster to be a wonderful expression of new life, the ASA received over 800 complaints that it was exploitative and immoral. It had the highest level of spontaneous recall in advertising history. Such shock tactics made the public confront uncomfortable issues and helped re-defined advertising's potential role.

TV commercial production involves selecting and combining incidents, making events into stories and narratives and creating characters for maximum impact on the identified target audience. Here are two examples starring children.

Example 1

Brand: Barnardo's Charity

British Television Advertising Awards, gold award winner 2010

Title: Turnaround

Agency: BBH

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/48794509-9a23-46e9-845d-3d4f8b6b26d2>

Here a vulnerable young girl has run away from home and drifted into prostitution and drugs but she is rescued with the support of the Barnardo's team. Barnardo's skilfully demonstrates how it can turn lives around and provides a compelling case to persuade the public to support its charity.

Note how footage is repeated in this commercial but with a completely different sound commentary running along with it.

Questions to discuss:

- How do the two script versions in the film soundtrack affect your perceptions of the person portrayed each time?
- What clues give away the child's age?
- Could you write another script to tell a different story with these images?

Example 2

Brand: Hovis (Premier Foods)

British Television Advertising Awards, gold award winner 2009

Title: Go on Lad

Agency: MCBBD

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/61485ed7-864a-4ff3-bad3-f51c704bd695>

This commercial charted 122 years of the history of Britain from the beginnings of Hovis in 1886. A young boy runs through his local streets through different periods of time observing references to the sinking of the Titanic, the suffragette movement, the first and second world wars, the Queen's coronation of 1953, the swinging sixties, England winning the world cup in 1966, the miners' strike in the 1980s and the Millennium celebrations. The story encapsulated the heritage and tradition of the Hovis brand and caught the imagination of the British public who voted *Go On Lad* as the best television commercial of the decade. Above all, in the weeks following the launch, sales of Hovis products jumped by over £12,000,000.

Questions to discuss:

- Why do you think this commercial was especially popular with the British public? What is represented here that struck a chord?
- What does it say about the representation of life in Britain today?
- Which classes in society are represented? Which are not?
- How does this reflect on the brand?
- How does the music soundtrack steer and reflect the changing themes?
- What character traits does the boy project when he arrives home at the end of the film in modern times?

Youth, Middle Age and Senior Citizens

Advertising research tells us that people over 45 years of age have become the largest, and one of the biggest spending, segments of the UK population; they own more than 85% of the national wealth. However, until recently nearly all the people appearing in advertisements were under 30 years of age with older people mainly being represented in health or financial product advertising.

Today there's a real sense of agelessness amongst the over 45s and they are sensitive to being patronised or pigeon-holed as "past it".

Advertisers find themselves having to strike a balance between this reality and the economic necessity of forging long-term relationships with the young.

Example 1

Brand: John Lewis/Never Knowingly Undersold

Title: Always a Woman

Date: 2011

Agency: Adam & Eve

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/3d69846e-75da-4917-9cba-1756aafef699>

This shows how this dilemma has been approached by ingeniously incorporating several generations of one family during a person's lifetime.

Example 2

Brand: IKEA kitchens

Title: Kitchen Party

Date: 2011

Agency: Mother, London

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/19e3bcfe-2961-4d57-843c-85c0ebadf520>

This shows well groomed young people dancing at a party with the soundtrack of the band “Man Like Me” performing Jona Lewie’s song “*They will always find me in the kitchen at parties*”.

Example 3



Brand: Debenhams department stores

Media: Magazine advertisement

Title: Attleborough Allotment Club

Date: 2007

Questions to discuss:

- To what extent do these commercials or advertisements convey accurate representations of people in the various age groups?
- How does the music in each of the TV commercials help to create an atmosphere or tell a story?
- Do you think the Debenhams press advertisement successfully reaches its audience?

Representing disability

The government Office for Disability Issues has produced a clear set of guidelines for the representation of disability in advertising. It emphasises that “most disability is not visible. This is an issue to consider in representation, to make sure there isn't over-representation of, for example, people who use wheelchairs. Print and poster advertising tend to overuse this example. Television, film and radio offers greater scope to include forms of disability that are not visible.” It also states:

“Depicting disabled people in responsible jobs or senior positions can change negative or limiting assumptions and expectations. Avoid representing disabled people as victims. However you should also avoid representing disabled people as heroes.”

Ref: *Using a Range of Communication Channels to reach Disabled People* (Department of Work & Pensions/Office for Disability Issues, 2014).
www.gov.uk/using-a-range-of-communication-channels-to-reach-disabled-people

Here are two examples, one produced by the government, the other by a leading charity:

Example 1

Advertiser: Disability Rights Commission
Title: Nice Day
Date: 2007
Agency: McCann Erickson
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/d50abcbb-7107-432d-8f1c-5d034032ff61>

Example 2

Advertiser: Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Title: Rubbish
Date: 2008
Agency: Freud Communications
<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/0e994fea-c840-4727-a7b8-3e3fa7907fa6>

Questions to discuss:

- Compare the techniques of using real people or of animated creatures with voiceovers of real people: Which is more effective and why?
- What impact do these ads have on you? Do they make a difference to how you think about disability? How would you raise awareness of these issues differently?

Classroom activities

Classroom activity 1:

- Divide the class into small groups. Each group becomes an advertising agency marketing and creative team and they are each given the same brief. The brief describes a famous brand client and their product and outlines their target customer e.g. a new brand of soap aimed at the female teenage market. Each agency group is told they are competing with the other agency groups to win the contract. The client has supplied this basic information to several different agencies and asked each agency to formulate an advertising campaign and make a pitch for putting it in to action. The brand client will then choose which agency is the most successful and decide which one will represent them.
- The brief only has basic information and so the first action for each group is to conduct some market research. A questionnaire is required, surveying the views of at least 30 individuals. The group should collect together various advertisements from magazines which represent different types of young women. Part of the questionnaire can then be focussed on asking people what they think of certain images of young women. Having selected 6 final images, 10 questions should be devised for the questionnaire. It must be possible to answer each question with a tick in an appropriate box. The first questions will include details about the interviewee e.g.
 - Age group: 10-14; 16-20; 21-25; 30-45; 45-60; 61 plus
 - Profession (or hoped for profession if still at school) and/or main role (E.g. full time mother/father, retired pensioner etc.)
 - Whether they read a) magazines b) watch television c) use the Internet
 - Do they remember a particular advertisement and if it influenced anything they actually purchased.
 - Devise a list of elements in an advertisement which interviewees might find memorable: e.g. use of humour, guilt, envy, glamour, fashion, witty text, art work, presence of celebrities, truthfulness of representation (or not) etc.
 - The final part of the questionnaire will be to show the interviewee the 6 images that were selected earlier and ask specific questions about their content.
- Once the questionnaires have been completed, the information can be gathered together and results analysed by using statistics, graphs and charts.
- Using these results the group is then asked to decide on the type of image of woman they would like to use to advertise their product. They then submit various designs (drawings/paintings/computer graphics/ collage paste-ups etc.) for a press advertisement. For a more involved project the group could devise a TV commercial. For this they should produce a story board i.e. draw a sequence of 10-12 images showing different events in the film in the same way that a strip cartoon is constructed, and also write text.
- The whole project could be re-run with a new brief for a shower gel aimed at the male teenage market, or male over 20s market etc. How might the approach to imagery and language differ?

Classroom activity 2:

Analysing advertisements

Advertisements are carefully and deliberately constructed to produce a specific response and message for a particular target audience. As you study the advertisements and commercials in this resource consider how each one conveys its meaning as follows:

- Is the text or image intended to be realistic? Which texts or images seem more realistic than others and why?
- Are the people accurately portrayed?
- Is the advertisement truthful according to the contemporary values of the decade in which it was produced?
- What is included or excluded in the advertisement?
- Do advertisements affect our views of particular social groups or issues?
- What techniques are used to persuade people to engage with a product or service?
- What stereotypes or representations are being used for gender, age, status and location?

Elements:

- The product or service in the ad: How immediately obvious is this?
- Production and typography styles: Identify how these make an impact.
E.g.
 - Use of either eye-catching colour or black and white or high/low definition to achieve clarity, softness, subtlety, drama, light, shade etc
 - Proportion of text in relation to image
 - Choice of typeface and different sizes of lettering to emphasise the product, brand or other aspect.
 - Photography, illustration, cartoon, animation
 - Choice of film genre for a TV commercial
- Main imagery: Who is the central figure? If so what are their qualities, what are they doing, who are they with, how are they behaving, what is their role?
- Eye-catching language: How do the words contribute to the advertising message and what assumptions do they make about the reader? E.g. double meanings, play on words or puns.
- Tone of voice in the text: What kind of tone is used and how does this affect how the message is received? E.g. playing on guilt, giving an order or reward, humour, subtlety, shock tactics, enthusiasm etc.
- Music: How does the music affect the mood and message of the ad?
- Target audience: Who is the advertisement aimed at and what kind of lifestyle do they have?
- Bias and objectivity: Do advertising texts and images support particular views about the world? Do they use moral, social or political values?
- Brand identity: How does the advertisement reflect the brand's core values? What distinguishes these from other brands of similar products? What message/s is the advertiser trying to convey in the advertisement and how is it achieved? Is the message obvious or is there a more subtle angle or back story?
(E.g. style of production, language and style of text/slogans, tone of voice, types of people represented, illustration v. photography, design of brand name or logo, etc.)