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# The Role of Men's Fragrance Advertising in the Mating Game

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I feel a very special kinship to fragrance suppliers. As an advertising man, I too, have worked with marketing management in the fragrance and cosmetics industry. So we have served the same master. Those of you who work on new products, from salesperson to perfumer, struggle daily with the client's perception of the consumer. Therefore, after approval of final submission, you must wait with some interest to see how your client communicates the fragrance in advertising. This is my subject.

What motivates a man to wear fragrance on his body? He certainly doesn't apply cologne to close his facial pores or tone his skin. I believe the primary if not sole purpose is to make a sexual statement or communicate a sexual message. Everyone has a perception of themselves which they would like to impart to others. The fragrance a man chooses to wear is selected to help him promote and support that message. That message is "I'm sexy" . . . "I'm virile" . . . "I'm manly" . . . "I'm sophisticated" . . . "I'm worldly" . . . "I'm successful" . . . or any combination of these. Any male, regardless of his sexual proclivity, who denies using fragrance for those reasons is either lying or out of touch with his inner feelings.

The premise is clearly supported by the advertising being created in the industry. The methods vary. The claims are interpreted in many ways. But the intent is the same.

Old Spice commercials are a prime example of the premise, executed in a deceptively simple, basic manner. Our hero returns from a voyage. He's handsome, manly, worldly but still very working-class. He walks past many admiring women and heads directly home to his beautiful, faithful woman, presumably his wife. The message is very direct. Manly guy, admired by many women, gets and keeps the beautiful girl. Thanks to Old Spice, he is a cleancut sexpot. I believe that the success of Old Spice is also due in large measure to a pleasant, appealing, safe scent and one of the most brilliant bottles ever developed for a man's fragrance.

The Chaps (Ralph Lauren) commercial is a favorite of mine. It is "Marlboro Country" revisited, replete with horses, leather, silver and great music. It is loaded with predictable macho symbols, but I forgive them because the commercial is done so well.

Grey Flannel (Geoffrey Beene) attempts to translate the print advertising image in their television spot. The hero is dressing. His moves

## 1982 Perfumers Symposium—Wechter

are very slow and decisive. He wears expensive shirts. In the background we hear a sax playing soulful jazz. He's a contemporary man. Very sexy. Very confident. Understated macho.

In Chaz (Revlon) advertising we have a composite character who starts out demonstrating one side of his life and ends up showing quite another. Many of the popular symbols of American manliness are present in this commercial. It has horses, cattle, the western setting, affluent surroundings and toys for rich men. The Chaz character is portrayed by Tom Selleck who is now a very familiar face on the popular television show, "Magnum, P.I."

Initially, I confused the Blue Stratos commercial with a Wrigley's Spearmint Gum spot featuring a hang glider. Upon closer viewing we see our handsome, young hero swooping over the California coast, being seen and admired by a beautiful woman in a speeding convertible. Announcer says: "Unleash the spirit . . . live a brisk, bold, adventurous life." Translation: Use Blue Stratos and uncover that repressed sexpot in you that lurks beneath the surface. If you do, you'll be macho and get the girl. The formula is very close to Old Spice.

I am personally enthralled by the Paco Rabanne commercial because it demonstrates what can be done when agency and client are willing to take a risk. It wasn't speculation on their part. To the contrary, all concerned had to know this was a hazardous undertaking. Though it may seem silly and immature, it is daring to suggest that people sleep together, without pajamas and make love. It's bold to imply that people are lustful and enjoy sex enough to discuss it openly. Perhaps this spot sets a questionable precedent. I leave that to be debated by wiser minds. Suffice to say that others have been equally provocative, but few have been quite so

successful in communicating the important role of fragrance in the mating game.

I love the Honcho spot because it illustrates what I believe motivates men to wear fragrance. It's blatant, honest, funny and very memorable. The product was discontinued in test market. That was a business decision. The television spot will always be a success to me.

Brut was a successful entry before Faberge selected Joe Namath as their spokesman. Namath may lack some credibility, but he is a charming, manly, roguish character, nevertheless. Namath brings to Brut commercials the same quality that Burt Reynolds imparts to movies such as "Smokey & The Bandit." The portrayal is a put-on, but who cares.

The Pierre Cardin commercial has two stars: one is a great looking male model and the other is the Plaza Hotel. There is a beautiful woman tucked away in the hero's suite, but the scenario is a series of morning activities conducted by a handsome, successful man in very expensive surroundings. The message is clear, direct and uncomplicated.

The new Aramis commercial uses a well-executed "slice-of-life" situation that is reminiscent of a daytime soap opera. The entire episode takes place at the most popular film location in New York, the Plaza Hotel. In short, great looking guy meets spectacular lady and all plans for the next 24 hours are cancelled. You quickly learn that they're very old friends who obviously had a close relationship in the past. She's mesmerized, but not too smitten to notice that he "Still wears Aramis."

Most print advertising for men's fragrance is stiff and pretentious. The elements are repeated so often, it seems as though all manufacturers give the same instructions to their agencies. Perhaps there exists some unwritten set of rules

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that all follow with blind obedience. The magazines are filled with examples of the formula: product shot, a line of tricky copy, company logo. Under the best of circumstances, the end result is a billboard with product identity.

I am particularly puzzled by the advertising for some prestigious fragrance houses and for many of the designer fragrances. For people who are in the business of creating imagery, their advertising efforts seem uninspired. It may be a lack of knowledge or interest, but I suspect it's more a case of arrogance and conceit. Their print advertising appears to consist of their name, a short, profound phrase and a dramatic photograph of product. Perhaps that is why so many compete for a handful of adoring, fickle customers.

Devin reminds me of the carefree, wealthy horsey-set who live expensively and suffer from "Locust Valley" lockjaw. Guerlain's ads are terribly French. There's a lovely shot of a beautiful bottle superimposed on a beautiful tree, and this is France, and we're Guerlain, and who cares if Americans can't pronounce "Habit Rouge."

Burberry, Van Cleef & Arpel, Lamborghini and Gucci, I lump together. I wonder if they genuinely care to sell the stuff. Looking at their advertising leads me to believe that they went into the fragrance business because it seemed like a neat idea. Gucci ads always catch my eye. I stare at the bottle convinced that if I personally removed the cap, a voice from somewhere will say, "This fragrance was not meant for the likes of you." Jovan advertising is hit and miss, very iffy, but their packaging and product-positioning is inspired.

Change is possible. Consider the advertising done for Paco Rabanne a few years ago and compare it to the most recent efforts. Look at the work done for Chaps and compare it to the efforts of the other designers who mold fashion. Designers promote authority and confidence and the user of a designer fragrance is borrowing this authority as a means of certifying sophistication and worldliness. The paramount message in fragrance remains sexual attraction, and sex sells products today.



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## 1982 Perfumers Symposium

Consumer trends are never easy to predict. The 1960s and 1970s generated many upheavals in consumer values, politics and lifestyles. Eclectic hairdos, concern with environment, rebellion against established ideals paralleled a growth in lifestyle fragrances and an expansion of health and personal care products. Adventurous marketers found new freedom to experiment and promote fragrances and products with mass appeal.

What lies ahead? How will the political, economic and social environment shape consumer needs and values? Suppliers as well as marketers are exploring these questions. PPF is a company that has been projecting perspectives for the future. On April 5, 1982, Proprietary Perfumes Ltd. (PPL), Food Industries and Bertrand Freres combined to form PPF International, one of the world's leading suppliers of fragrances and flavors.

With international headquarters in Ashford, Kent, England, and operations in the United

States, France, Germany, Brazil, Japan and Singapore, PPF has been supplying quality fragrances for more than 20 years. Entering the U.S. market in 1973, PPF is rapidly becoming one of the major fragrance suppliers in the country.

Michael Waldock joined PPF International in 1970 as regional sales manager at the Ashford, Kent, England headquarters. He has traveled extensively for PPF and has sold fragrances in more than 50 countries.

In 1976, he led a strategy team that recommended increased investment in the company's U.S. operations, which he managed briefly a year later. Mr. Waldock returned to Ashford in 1977 as International Sales Controller and was named President of PPF's U.S. company in 1980.

Mr. Waldock will explore the subject of consumer trends, lifestyles and tastes of the year 2001, giving us a perspective of what the future might hold.

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