

# Appealing to Women: An Analysis of Print Advertisements in Three Women's Interest Magazines

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to analyze advertisements in magazines targeting women readers and find the preferred type of appeals advertisers used. This study analyzed 590 advertisements in three women's interest magazines from October 2012 to April 2013. It was found that the top three product categories advertised were food and drink, personal care, and laundry and household products. The most frequently used appeals were performance, availability, and components/contents. This study provided details on the application of the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System and laid the foundation for future studies in advertising appealing to women.*

## I. Introduction

What do women really want? In the AMC series *Mad Men*, advertising creative Don Draper boldly stated, "Advertising is based on one thing: happiness. And do you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear" (Weiner, 2007). Do women want products that free them from fear? Do they want products that ensure safety? Are they interested in the newest products on the market? This author was interested in analyzing print advertisements targeting women and what appeals advertisers most frequently appeal to in order to affect their buying intentions.

Contrary to a general thought that magazine readership is decreasing because of new technology, magazine readership has grown over the past five years. Additionally, magazines deliver more ad impressions than TV or Web in a half-hour period. People still spend a lot of time reading magazines – the average reader spends 43 minutes with each issue ("11 Facts About Magazines," n.d.).

The research performed in this study is important because print advertisements are still relevant. The more effectively advertisements sway the buying intentions of women, a demographic that is predicted to control two-thirds of the consumer wealth in the U.S. over the next decade, the more the product or service will sell ("U.S. Women," 2013). The average cost of a full-page, color advertisement in the three publications analyzed in this study amounts to \$178,037 (The Hearst Corporation, 2013; Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013; Real Simple, 2013). It is important to analyze the advertisements that are being printed because a return is expected on the huge investment on brands.

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## **II. Literature Review**

### ***Appealing to Women***

There has been much research that looked at how gender affects advertising. Baird, Walhers, and Cooper (2007) found that men and women respond differently to advertising. They found that one's emotional involvement with stimuli tend to enhance memory and that this linkage appears more highly pronounced for women than for men (Baird, 2007).

Additionally, Cramphorn (2011) found that women typically respond more positively to advertisements than men. Although there has been little research dealing with advertisements aimed specifically at women, there has been a lot of research that looked at how gender relates to advertisements.

### ***Emotional Advertising***

The use of emotional advertising is very prevalent in print advertisements (Baird, 2007). Whether it is the use of a visual of a couple in an advertisement for a car, the use of dramatic copy in an advertisement for a television series, or the use of a visual of a family holding hands in an advertisement for a cruise line, emotion is frequently used. Using an emotional appeal can lead to a positive attitude toward the brand and may sway the buying intentions of the consumer (Baird, 2007).

An important study has found that emotional appeals may affect memory (Canli et al., 2002). Memory is crucial for a successful advertising campaign. The message in the advertisement must be stored in the memory and then recalled later when a brand decision is being made to affect the buyer's intent (Ambler, 1999).

Baird, Wahlers and Cooper found that using emotional appeals can be beneficial for advertising to women and could be expanded by using emotional appeals to products normally devoid of emotion, such as tires. For example, the use of a baby in an advertisement for tires to stress the safety of the family could be more memorable, especially for women (Baird, 2007).

### ***Women as Socially Oriented***

It has been found that men respond better to advertisements about self or ego, while women respond better to advertisements that are more externally focused (Brunel & Nelson, 2003). From early ages, girls play "dress up" and "try on" social roles. Women are more socially oriented and have more empathy towards their friends (Brizendine, 2007). Women respond to images or situations that they can empathize with. Additionally, photographs are more effective with women (Cramphorn, 2011). Advertisements that use celebrities, typical people, and personalities have been found to effectively grab the attention of women (Cramphorn, 2011).

### ***Cultural Priorities***

Advertising affects buying behaviors by associating particular values to a brand and then emphasizing how these values may be gained or experienced through the purchase or use of the particular brand or product (Morris, 2013).

Pamela K. Morris and Katharine Nichols performed a content analysis of advertisements from magazines in the United States and France. They found that American advertisements show people smiling more often than those in French Magazines. U.S. magazines also present more women, non-working women, and "women as decoration" in their print advertisements than their French counterparts (Morris, 2013). In comparison with France, the U.S. had more advertisements for makeup and hair care products. Additionally, they found that Americans prefer makeup to skincare products, and they use makeup to cover flaws and treat makeup as a commodity. They found that American women value great hair because of the prevalence of hair care products. By looking at how frequently certain products or product categories are advertised, assumptions can be made about the cultural priorities of the culture that the magazine is distributed in.

### ***The Importance of Advertising***

In 2004, American businesses spent over \$260 billion on advertising. Advertisers rarely direct advertising to a particular gender, and most advertising is "broad-brush" (Cramphorn, 2011). Cramphorn (2011)

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found that no matter what style used, advertisements targeting women are overwhelmingly more effective. It is important that advertisers are successful in advertising towards women because women in America today have tremendous spending power – and it's growing. Women's purchasing power is estimated to grow from \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion annually. Fleishmann-Hillard Inc. estimates that women will control two-thirds of the consumer wealth in the U.S. over the next decade. Additionally, women handle the bulk of purchasing decisions for consumer goods in the U.S. and are likely to influence or manage many other big ticket purchases – such as homes, automobiles, appliances, furniture, etc. as well as a large portion of the apparel, groceries and everyday purchases (“U.S. Women,” 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel was the theoretical framework used in this study (Taylor, 1999). Taylor stated that there is no single way that advertising works. Advertising depends on the situation, which consists of the type of product, the nature of the target audience, the purchase motivation, and the importance of the decision to the consumer.

The Six-Segment Message Strategy Model is a wheel that contains six segments. The left-hand side of the wheel represents the transmissional or informational view while the right-hand side represents the ritual or transformational view.

The transmissional view contains three segments: Ration, Acute Need, and Routine. The ration segment is characterized by the Marshallian Economic Model (Taylor, 1999). Consumers require a lot of information before purchasing products in this segment. Consumers are concerned with the product features, services, warranties, and price. The acute need segment is characterized by the acute need that consumers have to buy a product. The need for these products pops up unexpectedly and consumers must make decisions quickly. The routine segment is characterized by the Pavlovian Learning Model. Consumer decisions are often made in a routine way for products in this category. The consumer does not think much about the product before they purchase it. These products are often purchased in a habitual way.

The ritual view contains three segments: Ego, Social, and Sensory. The Ego segment is characterized by the Freudian Psychoanalytic Model (Taylor, 1999). This is the “I am me” segment. Consumers buy products that define who they are. The social segment is characterized by the Veblenian Social-Psychological Model (Taylor, 1999). Products in this segment are used to make a statement to others (Taylor, 1999). Consumers buy these products to gain social approval from family, significant others, and other people in their lives. The sensory segment is characterized by Cyrenaics philosophy (Taylor, 1999). These products provide consumers with “moments of pleasure” or “life's little treats” based on the senses (Taylor, 1999).

### **Coding Strategy**

The coding strategy used in this study was the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System (Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern, 1983) as adapted by Robert R. Harmon, Nabil Y. Razzouk, and Bruce L. Stern in their study, *The Information Content of Comparative Magazine Advertisements*. This original coding sheet can be found in Appendix I. This strategy was chosen because of its comprehensive categories and continued relevance and accordance with today's product categories and advertising appeals used.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the literature review, the following five research questions were asked:

- RQ1: What product categories are most advertised in women's interest magazines?
  - RQ2: Are there significant differences between product categories advertised or appeals used in Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study and this study?
  - RQ3: Are there significant differences between *Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* in terms of product categories?
  - RQ4: What informational cues do advertisers most frequently use to appeal to women?
  - RQ5: What informational cues do advertisers most frequently use within different product categories?
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### III. Methods

#### ***Sampling Procedure***

Using a content analysis, this study examined the message strategies most frequently used in print advertisements as they appeal to women. The author analyzed print advertisements in four women's interest magazines from October 2012 to April 2013. To reduce the number of ads, she selected magazines every other month from October 2012 to April 2013, resulting in a total of 590 advertisements were selected.

*Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* were chosen based on their readership statistics. *Real Simple* has a readership of 90% women, while *Martha Stewart Living* has a readership of 89% women, and *O, The Oprah Magazine* has a readership made up of 88% women.

Some advertisements were excluded because they were too small to contain the information. Those were found in the "Simply Shopping" section of *Real Simple*, in *Martha Stewart Living's* "The Marketplace" section, any "advertising promotions," "promotions," or "retail promotions."

#### ***Coding Strategy***

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The coding scheme was adapted further for this study. The magazine categories were changed for this study from *Ladies Home Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, and *Reader's Digest*, to *Real Simple*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. The month of the publication was added to the coding sheet so that the data could be analyzed according to the month.

One criterion omitted was "number of products compared" because none of the advertisements analyzed compared one product with another. The study dropped the "Other Durable Products (autos, etc.\*)" and "Agricultural Products" option under the "Type of Product" criterion and added 10 new criteria including automobiles, clothing/accessories, electronics, entertainment, Banking services, paper goods, philanthropic organizations, service/program, toys, and travel.

The question of "What limited-time, non-price deals are available with a particular purchase?" was changed to "What limited-time deals are available with a particular purchase?" so that the researcher could look at non-price deals as well as price deals.

The coding sheet used in this study can be found in Appendix II. And examples of coded advertisements can be found in Appendix III.

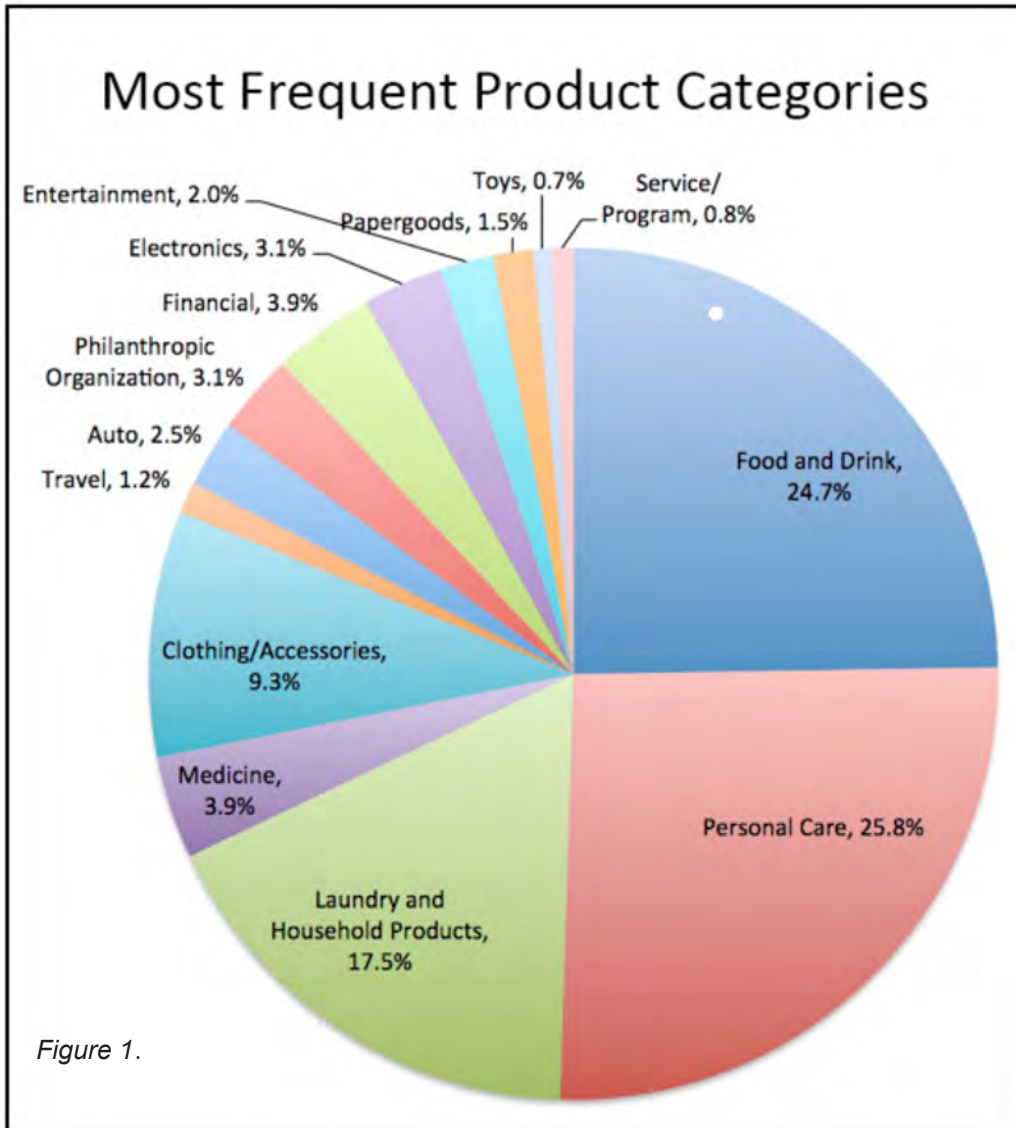
### IV. Findings & Discussion

#### ***Product Categories***

##### *Overall Product Categories*

RQ1 asked what product categories were most advertised in women's interest magazines. The top five product categories were food and drink, personal care, laundry and household products, medicine, and clothing/accessories. This can be seen in *Figure 1*.

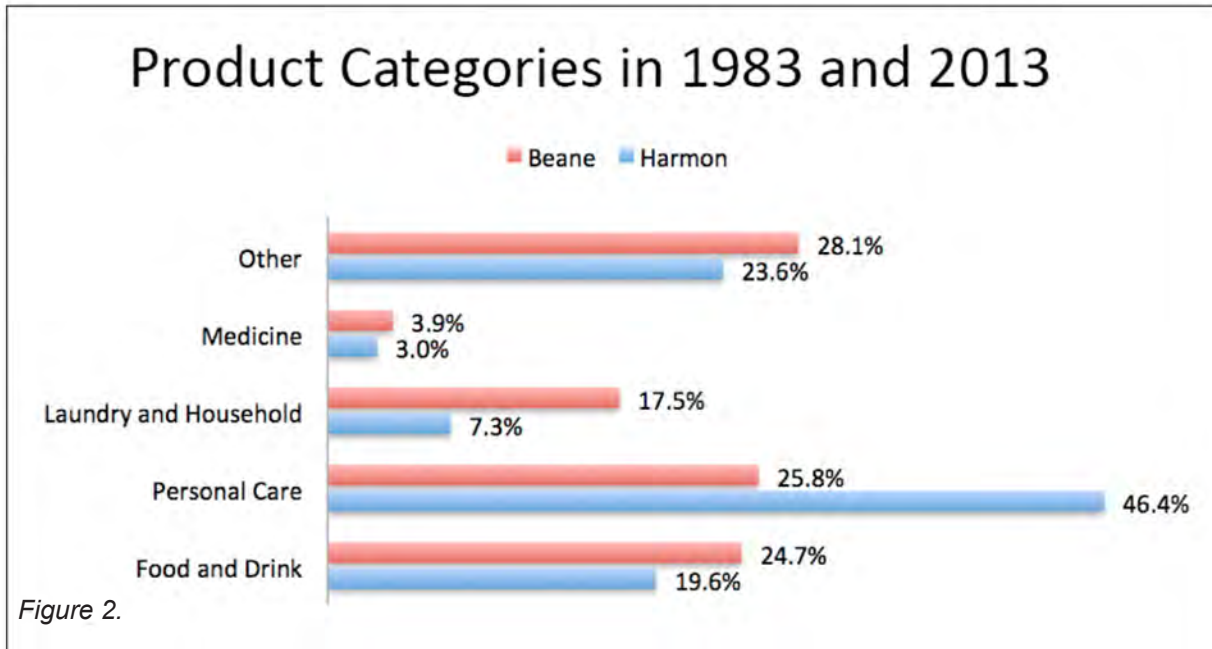
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### **Product Categories – A 30-Year Span**

RQ2 is about significant differences between product categories advertised or appeals used in Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study and this study? In *Figure 2*, the data from this study (marked as "Beane") was compared with the Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern study (marked as Harmon), which was performed in 1983.

To effectively compare the two studies, the author combined the product categories of clothing/accessories, travel, Auto, Philanthropic Organization, financial, electronics, entertainment, paper goods, toys, and service/program from this 2013 study into a new category called "Other." They make up 28.1% of the data. The product categories "Durables" and "Other Products/services" from Harmon, Rassouk, and Stern's 1983 study were combined into a category titled "other," which accounted for 23.6% of the data. Some changes have occurred over the 30 years: 10.2% more advertisements for Laundry and Household items found in the 2013 study; 5.1% more for food and drink items; and 20.6% down for personal care items.



**Product Categories: Comparing Publications**

RQ3 asked whether there are significant differences among three magazines in terms of product categories? Table 1 shows the percentages of each product category in each of the three different publications. *Real Simple* is indicated by “RS,” *Martha Stewart Living* is indicated by “MSL,” and *O, The Oprah Magazine* is indicated by “O.” The top 5 categories for each publication are highlighted.

In terms of food and drink, MSL has the largest portion of advertisements (40.8%), followed by RS (25.3%) and O (11.0%), as shown in Table 1. This difference occurs because each of the magazines focuses on different themes. Food/Entertaining is listed as one of MSL’s core editorial Themes (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). O makes no mention of food or entertaining in their positioning statement and food/beverage editorials make up only 11% of their editorials (The Hearst Corporation, 2013). RS “turns to us for the quick and effective fixes for her home, meals, celebrations, and messes” and still had a significant amount of advertisements in this category, with 25.3% (Real Simple, 2013).

In advertisements in the personal care category, O (39.6%) was followed by RS (25.0%) and a distant third, MSL (10.0%). This is because O treated this as a “catalyst that helps confident, intelligent, affluent women live their best life. With an emphasis on personal growth, it engages and addresses every aspect of a woman’s life – the material, the intellectual and the emotional” (The Hearst Corporation, 2013). Additionally, editorials concerning personal growth make up 16% of their editorials (The Hearst Corporation, 2013).

In the case of advertisements for laundry and household products, MSL (24.2%) was followed by RS (19.0%) and O (9.1%). This is because one of MSL’s core editorial themes is decorating & home (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). Additionally, MSL has a “detailed emphasis on every aspect of today’s well-rounded lifestyle – from food and entertaining, crafting and decoration, to holidays, celebrations, family, and work – the brand remains keenly relevant, authentic, and meaningful by designing innovative solutions to the challenges of living well” (Martha Stewart Omnimedia, 2013). RS’s editorial calendar for 2013 features “closet organizing,” “cleaning shortcuts/routines,” “home handbook,” and others. Additionally, 77% of RS’s readers own their own home. Their readers are homeowners who look for ways to organize and clean their home.

**Table 1. Product Categories Across Publications**

	RS	MSL	O
Food and Drink	25.3%	40.8%	11.0%
Personal Care	25.0%	10.0%	39.6%
Laundry and Household Products	19.0%	24.2%	9.1%
Medicine	3.8%	5.0%	3.2%
Clothing/Accessories	8.5%	2.5%	16.2%
Travel	1.9%	0.8%	0.0%
Auto	2.8%	2.5%	1.9%
Philanthropic Organization	1.9%	4.2%	4.5%
Financial	5.4%	2.5%	1.9%
Electronics	2.5%	2.5%	4.5%
Entertainment	1.3%	0.0%	5.2%
Papergoods	2.2%	0.8%	0.6%
Toys	0.3%	1.7%	0.6%
Service/Program	0.0%	2.5%	1.3%

Therefore, it is logical that there were many advertisements that fall into the laundry and household product category.

O had many advertisements that fell under the clothing/accessories category, the second largest product category with 16.2%, followed by RS (8.5%) and MSL (2.5%). Style is one of the core editorial themes in O so this fact is not surprising (The Hearst Corporation, 2013).

In terms of travel, which included brands such as Westin, Disney, Hilton, Hyatt, RS led MSL (.8%) and O (0%). This may be because RS audience has the highest median household income. RS readers' median household income, \$92,145, exceeded that of MSL (\$72,477) and O (\$68,991). The higher median household income is correlated with more ads that promote travel.

*Martha Stewart Living* (4.2%) and *O, The Oprah Magazine* (4.5%) had more advertisements for philanthropic organizations that *Real Simple* (1.9%).

Advertisements for financial services, which included brands such as Ally, Chase, BB&T, Wells Fargo, Citi, Fidelity, etc. made up 5.4% of products advertised in RS, followed by MSL (2.5%) and O (1.9%). The difference among the three magazines may be due to the income differences among different readers. Advertisers are more likely to advertise financial services in publications that have audiences with higher median household incomes.

There were significantly more advertisements for products that were categorized under the entertainment category in O (5.2%) than in RS (1.3%) or MSL (0%). Brands in the entertainment category included Barnes & Noble, People Magazine, Dr. Phil, etc.

**Product Categories: Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel**

Figure 3 shows the product categories from the Resnik-Stern Content Classification system broken up in Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel. The product categories were placed based on the explanations of the six different segments in Taylor's study (1999). The products under the category of segment 4 make up a significant 68% of the advertisements found in the three magazines. Taylor found that users placed groceries and personal-care products into this category. People tend to perpetually buy the same brand for these products because people believe there is little difference among them. It is not surprising because advertisers need to penetrate this market given that users typically buy products in a routine way.

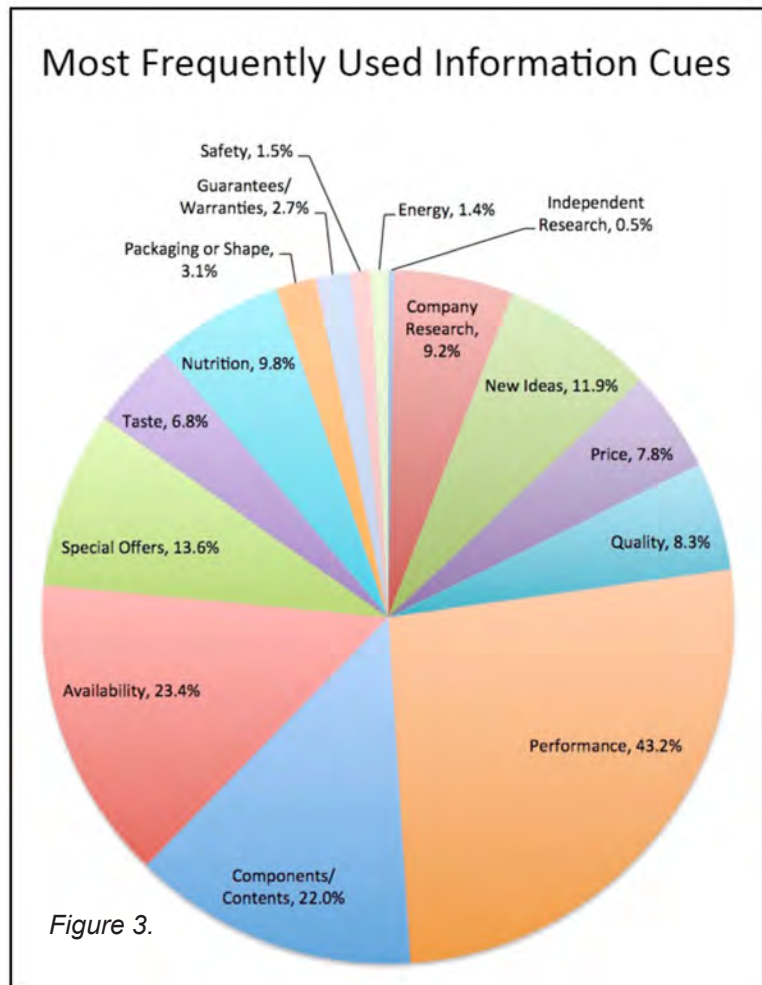


Figure 3.

## Information Cues

### Overall Information Cues

RQ4 asked about informational cues advertisers most frequently use to appeal to women. The frequency of the information cues is illustrated in *Figure 4*. Almost half or 43.2% of the advertisements mentioned performance. This means that 43.2% of the advertisements answered the question, “What does the product do?” or “How well does it perform relative to other products?”

The second most used cue was Availability, which answered the question, “Where can the product be purchased?” or “When will the product be available for purchase?” 23.4% of the advertisements used this cue?

The third most used appeal was Components/Contents, which answered the question, “What is the product composed of?” or “What ingredients does it contain?” or “What ancillary items are included with the product?”

Special Offers were also used frequently (13.6%). This appeal answered the question, “What limited-time deals are available with a particular purchase?”

New Ideas (11.9%) dealt with the advertisements that introduced a totally new concept or presented the advantages of the new concept.

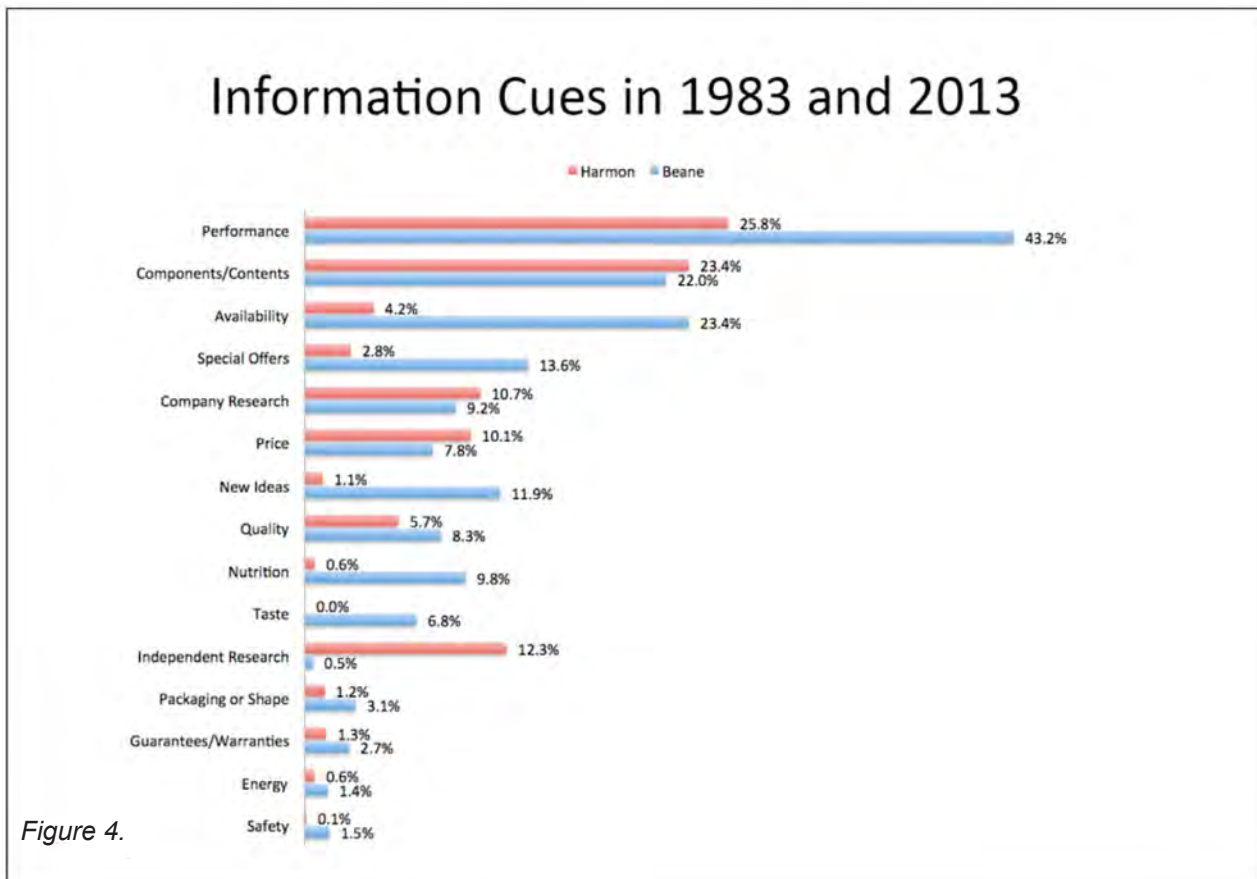


Figure 4.

### Information Cues – A 30-Year Span

Relatively speaking, many of the appeals that were used in 1983 and 2013 were similar in terms of percentages.

The following areas showed the difference of 5% or more during the 30-year period, as shown in *Figure 4*. Performance was up 17.4%; nutrition up 9.2%, which dovetails with the increased amount of advertisements in 2013, 5.1% more than 30 years ago; and taste up 6.8% from nil in 1983. Independent research went down from 12.3% in 1983 to .5% in 2013. It seems that if any research was used, it was company research.



The following areas showed less than 5% of changes over the time probably because those appeals are as equally valued and used today as they were 30 years ago. These categories included Components/Contents; Company Research; Price; Quality; Packaging or Shape; Guarantees/Warranties; Energy; Safety. The last two categories were not expected, given today's society value of "green" products and safety features.

Special Offers can't be compared because the researchers in the 1983 study only included "limited-time, non-price deals" but the author looked at all deals, including price deals.

**Information Cues: Comparing Product Categories**

RQ5 asked what informational cues do advertisers use most frequently within different product categories? The product categories most frequently used were personal care, food and drink, and laundry and household products.

**Personal Care**

The three cues most frequently found in advertisements for products that were in the "personal care" category were performance, components/contents, and company research, as shown in Table 2. Advertisers most frequently explain what the personal care product does or how well it performs relative to other products, as well as explaining what the products is composed of or what ingredients it contains. Advertisers frequently use these cues to compare their products with their competitor. Additionally, advertisers may use research to back up the statements about how the product performs relative to others' products.

**Food and Drink**

The three cues most frequently used for "food and drink" products were nutrition, components/contents, and taste, as shown in Table 3 above. Researchers most frequently give specific data concerning the nutritional value of a product or make a direct specific comparison with another product, as well as explaining what the product is composed of or what it contains. Additionally, they frequently present evidence from an independent source that the taste of their product is superior to others.'

**Table 2. Personal Care**

Personal Care	
Performance	79.6%
Components/Contents	33.6%
Company Research	32.2%
New Ideas	26.3%
Availability	21.1%
Special Offers	10.5%
Price	5.3%
Guarantees/Warranties	4.6%
Quality	3.9%
Packaging or Shape	2.6%
Safety	2.0%

**Table 3. Food and Drink**

Food and Drink	
Nutrition	36.3%
Components/Contents	26.7%
Taste	26.7%
Availability	13.7%
Special Offers	9.6%
Performance	8.9%
Quality	7.5%
Packaging or Shape	4.8%
New Ideas	4.1%
Price	2.1%
Guarantees/Warranties	1.4%
Safety	0.7%

**Laundry and Household Products**

The three cues most frequently used for products that fell into the "laundry and household products" category were performance, availability, and components/contents, as shown in Table 4 on next page. Advertisers most frequently explain what their laundry or household product does and/or how well it performs relative to others'. Additionally, advertisers often state when and where the product can be purchased. It is also common for advertisers to mention what the laundry or household product is composed of, what it contains, or what supplemental items are included with the product.

## V. Conclusion

Literature review clearly shows that women respond more positively to emotional advertising and remember emotional advertisements more frequently. Women respond to advertisements that are externally focused and involve groups of people.

This study found that the most advertised product categories in women's interest magazines are food and drink, personal care, laundry and household products, medicine, and clothing and accessories. There was no strong difference between this study and the study performed using the same categories in 1983 in terms of frequency of products advertised. The only large difference was more advertisements for personal care products in 2013 than 30 years ago. There were some variations among the three magazines in 2013. All these differences resulted from the characteristics of the publications' audience and their core editorial content. When the product categories from the Resnik-Stern Content Classification System were broken down into Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel, the products in the category of segment 4, the routine segment, made up a whopping 68% of all of the advertisements analyzed.

Overall, the information cues used most frequently were performance, availability, components/contents, special offers, and new ideas. There was no strong difference in the frequency of cues used between the two studies. The large increase occurred in the cues of availability, new ideas, nutrition, or taste. The most frequently used product categories for personal care were performance, components/contents, and company research. Analysis of food and drink showed that nutrition, components/contents, and taste were the cues used most frequently in that product category. Lastly, it was found that performance, availability, and components/contents were the cues used most frequently in advertisements for laundry and household products.

Future research may address the limitations of this study. This study used only every other issue of magazines over a 7-month period. Given more time, all issues could have been coded. Additionally, a future study could expand the number of magazines used. Originally, *Ladies' Home Journal* was to be used in this study but the amount of advertisements was too large for one coder to handle. Additionally, multiple coders could increase the validity of the data collected. Future research could take into consideration advertisements in iPad and Kindle versions of the publications chosen.

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Table 4. Laundry and Household Products

Laundry and Household Products	
Performance	47.6%
Availability	29.1%
Components/Contents	19.4%
Special Offers	19.4%
Quality	15.5%
Price	13.6%
New Ideas	11.7%
Guarantees/Warranties	4.9%
Company Research	3.9%
Safety	3.9%
Packaging or Shape	2.9%
Energy	2.9%
Independent Research	1.9%
Taste	1.0%

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