
Corporate Mirrors

By Stephanie Ann Cota

Introduction

Corporate Mirrors looks at today's fashion images with the concept of a mirror. Today's fashion images are both a mirror and a reflection of personality types. Personality types are the result of a marketing system that sorts people into demographic clusters. Corporations rely heavily on these demographic clusters to sell products that are complimentary to particular personality types.

The concept of clustering comes from Claritas (www.claritas.com,) a major service used by marketing and advertising firms. Claritas offers two services:

1. Gather marketing information,
2. Help businesses identify who their customers are and where their customers are located.

“Consumers want the best value for their money. So do marketers. This is why products that make marketing more efficient is in great demand. Helping companies identify and reach their best prospects is a booming business.” (Birds of a Feather, American Demographics, 1995.)

Claritas' founder Jonathan Robbin, a social scientist, merged census data, marketing surveys, and zip codes into a lifestyle segmentation system called PRIZM (potential rating index for ZIP markets). PRIZM is the basis for cluster marketing in the United States and it is used by marketers world-wide.

In short, we make choices and the general pattern of those choices can be grouped into various clusters. Those clusters can be described as personalities. These choices range from the types of food we eat, the cars we drive, and the clothes we wear.

The Mirror

Image personalities have a profound influence over in our lives. *Corporate Mirrors* will look at how this works.

We are surrounded by social mirrors that reflect back to us a collection of personal attributes. Each attribute makes up a part of the human persona, such as ideals of thinness, intelligence, delicateness, stubbornness, shyness, and so on.

Corporate Mirrors will look at the female aspect of the concept of demographic clusters. In terms of product choices, I will discuss fashion by highlighting several world-name brands. The truth of the reflection will become apparent.

Claritas divided the US population into sixty-two clusters. These sixty-two clusters are numbered and divided into general income levels. They also have nicknames, such as Money and Brains, Boomtown Singles, and Shotguns and Pickups. The nicknames give a general indication of the cluster. Each cluster has attributes, such as income, educational level, where they live, race, children, and so on. For example, here is the cluster named Money and Brains:

07 Money and Brains (Sophisticated Urban Fringe Couples.) Cluster 07 is a mix of family types: singles, married couples with children and married couples without children. These families own their homes in upscale neighborhoods near cities. Dual incomes provide luxuries, travel and entertainment. Affluent (5), Age Groups: 55-64, 65+, Predominantly White, High Asian. (Source: Claritas.)

Corporate Mirrors will discuss three clusters that have been grouped under the general marketing term "Generation X." Here is a summary of the Generation X profile.

The people who make up Generation X are between the ages of 18-34 years old. Highly inclined toward the visual arts, this generation grew up during the TV years. Due to the demands of the workplace today for better skills and demand for a specialization, the percentage of Generation Xers in college is at 55%. This is a 43% increase in college attendance from a decade earlier. Generation X worries about their future, including finances, relationships, and marriage. Regarding money, Generation Xers tend to be much more pragmatic than baby-boomers. About 8% contribute to a retirement fund and over 40% invest in mutual funds.

Now that we have a description of the cluster, the next step is to use it. Companies turn to Neilson Media Research for this next step.

Neilson Media Research conducts surveys of media such as TV shows, newspapers, magazines, and so on. They do surveys and polls to determine the specific audience for each TV show, newspaper, and so on. This helps advertisers to gauge where they should advertise their product personas.

The Generation X woman between the ages of 18-34 years old is a high market target for image personality marketing. According to Claritas,

“The members of these clusters have few or no children, live in urbanized areas, are well-educated, and earn between \$60,000-\$150,000 per year. These women form the top 17% of wealth in the United States and are ethnically diverse.”

The group is fairly wealthy, has disposable income, and is easy to reach with media.

Mirroring & Reflections

Corporate Mirrors surveyed the following magazines: New York Magazine, Smart Money, Business Week, GQ, Tennis, PC Magazine, USA Today, Vanity Fair, Elle, Harper’s Bazaar, Allure, Marie Claire, and Redbook. Cosmopolitan magazine is read by the younger end of this demographic, primarily 18-22 year old urban, white women.

SRDS Consumer Magazine Advertising Agency (www.srds.com) is a print media advertising resource used by magazines and other medias to attract potential companies that would advertise in them. Let’s look at Harper’s Bazaar editorial profile, which they supplied to SRDS in the October, 2001 issue of SRDS, vol 83, no 10.

“Harper’s Bazaar is a magazine edited for the well-dressed, well-informed woman. Each month it looks at culture through a fashion lens. The convergence of fashion with design, technology and culture in Bazaar is the definition of style, making the magazine a style source for today’s modern woman. (Rec’d 5/20/01)

Here is another example of an ad by Essence magazine in SDRS:

Essence

Where it's @!

"Essence delivers Your Sales Message to 5.2 Million Upscale Women."

Essence magazine enhances and empowers African-American women in every way of their lives.

Age 18-34	49%
Head of Household	57%
Leases or Owns her own Vehicle	79%
Household Income \$30,000+	51%
Employed	70%
Access to the Internet	58%
Purchases Women's Apparel	75%

"For inspiration, entertainment and fulfillment, African-American women look no further than Essence. Contact Barbara Britton, Vice-President/National Advertising Director (212) 642-0699, www.essence.com

By knowing the editorial approach of the magazine, we know the audience of the magazine. This makes it fairly easy to predict which companies will advertise in any particular magazine. By looking at the brands that show up repeatedly in these magazines, we began to recognize a distinct personality and image. Interestingly, the emerging image persona is complimentary to the magazine's image persona. In turn, the magazine's image persona is complimentary to its readers' persona.

For example, *Victoria's Secret*, a world brand name for women's lingerie, idealizes femininity and self-satisfaction. A beautiful, slim woman is shown in lace or satin, often with a slight smile. In reality, *Victoria's Secret* is pushing its image of femininity and intimacy harder than most people would imagine.

"To see just how thoroughly Intimate Beauty Corp. is trying to rewrite the rules of the beauty business, check out its Victoria's Secret Beauty division's new line of laundry soaps."

Now, I know what you're thinking. Laundry soaps? Huh? I don't get it. I thought we were talking about fashion here. Well, to be entirely honest, the product itself really doesn't matter.

Why is a woman's fashion brand name selling laundry soap? What is important is the image behind the product.

The article goes on to state:

“Designed for the woman who wants little luxuries in every corner of her life, the collection elevates lowly items like fabric softener to the realm of elegant accessories. . . . By playing off the Victoria's Secret fantasy of life as a romantic romp, the beauty brand aims to take market share from mass merchants and department stores.” (Crain's New York Business v16, no 48, p4, 3/2000)

The article ends with the following:

“People have shown us they prefer to buy something where the complete experience is more aspirational.”

Only a few people actually look at any particular advertisement. In other words, ads catch the attention of only those targeted personality types. Fashion advertising shows us that different personality types exist and these can be matched with real people. It makes sense to form products that “mirror” these sixty-two personality types.

Shattering the Mirror to Reveal a Distant Truth

Qualities such as sexiness, material wealth, power, career satisfaction, sophistication, and natural beauty are displayed to this particular demographic of women. Let's examine the concept of persona and where that fits in with image personalities.

According to the *American Century Dictionary*, **persona** is defined as an “**aspect of the personality as shown to or perceived by others.**” Persona can include all of the attributes with which one surrounds oneself. Everything from attitudes to personal preferences form the persona. Clustering is so finely tuned that a complete profile can be made for each cluster. The Claritas clustering system can tell you which kind of toothbrush will be used by each cluster. Claritas can tell you how members of a cluster evaluate and buy products. Each quality that makes up the total persona can be broken down microscopically and examined for repeat patterns in behavior. It is through the establishment of repeat patterns that image personalities are born.

The concept of “mirroring” a persona is brought to the foreground. The persona becomes an idealization of the cumulative traits of the members of the demographic. The members of the demographic are a range of behaviors that is idealized in a particular instance and each is reflected in the other as the members project themselves as they would like to perceive themselves. The members of a demographic cluster

idealize themselves into an ideal type as an external projection of this type is created. It is this external projection that is shown and reflected in the mirror. The persona and the real world members form a pair. They are reflections of each other. The cluster method acts as a mirror which lets the group recognize itself in the persona, as if it were a reflection of the cluster.

From the vast range of all possible traits, lifestyle choices, consumer items, and so on, the demographics' members choose a particular array and create a persona, which is an objectification of their ideal. Most members of a demographic will match any particular trait only roughly. If the ideal is slim, a member may be a few pounds overweight. This leads to separation between the member and the ideal. The member sees the ideal as a distant, perfect vision to be attained. By concentrating on that vision, the current imperfect reality is suppressed. The ideal is fore-grounded and privileged: the ideal becomes the real, and the real becomes a faint reflection of the ideal. By looking into the mirror, the member sees the "true." The mirror becomes an oracle of truth.

*"Mirror, mirror on the wall.
Who is the fairest of them all?"*

To summarize, on one side is the actual members of the cluster. On the other side is an idealization of that cluster, based on personality traits of the cluster. The cluster recognizes itself because the idealization is a summary of its traits. In contrast, the cluster is faced with sixty-one other types that do not match it. Thus the cluster ignores the other sixty-one types due to non-recognition.

Gathering the Shards

Let's look at two world brand names, Ellen Tracy and Pelle-Pelle to determine the personas for their target markets.

In a recent article of the New York Times entitled "*Crawford: A Fixture for Revlon, is Now Apparel for Youthful Appeal.*" dated February 13, 2001, Ellen Tracy discusses her new marketing strategy with Cindy Crawford.

"The focus of the campaign is on a new theme intended to resonate with the potential new Ellen Tracy buyer: "Be everyone you are." Ziccardi brings the idea to life by having Ms. Crawford pose in a variety of looks and styles, from naughty to nice, that appear on consecutive pages of magazines like Elle, Glamour, Harper's Bazaar, In Style, New York, Marie Claire, Talk, Travel & Leisure, and Vogue along with bus posters, direct mailings and the Tracy Web site. 'Be everyone you are' means you can be all these characters in different aspects of your life. There are all these options available to women today."

Again, we are presented with an image personality that holds certain complimentary traits to the cluster.

“Some of the imagery is a little sexier, a little more emotional, to appeal to a wider range of customers. The images in the ads present Ms. Crawford in poses from career woman to next door neighbor to vixen, portraying moods ranging from sophisticated to approachable to hubba-hubba. The campaign is based on the results of a demographic survey conducted by Ziccardi among consumers in the affluent and luxury markets. The goal was to capture the new, younger luxury customer suitable for the Ellen Tracy brand yet maintaining the appeal to the core customer.” (Marketing to Women: Addressing Women and Women's Sensibilities, April 2001 p5, Pelle Pelle Launches Women's Apparel Line.)

Provided is a backgrounder on the Ziccardi Advertising agency. (Exert taken from *Advertising Age v 72 no24 June 11 2001. p. S1, S11, Brands Pursue Old, New Money*)

*“Today, consumers who can afford to purchase high-end goods differ not only by generations but by attitudes. Don Ziccardi, president-CEO of New York ad agency Ziccardi and Partners, whose clients include fashion designer Ellen Tracy and Loews Hotels, explored the landscape of the affluent to determine exactly who has the money and who is most likely to spend it. He has written a book called *Influencing the Affluent: Marketing to the Individual Luxury Consumer in a Volatile Economy*, which is due out in September 2001 from MJF Books.”*

Ziccardi has taken already available marketing data. In combination with their own primary research, they have broken down luxury products into four groups: *class brands, class gone mass, mass gone class, and everyday luxury items*. Why? Randy Jones, president-CEO of *Worth Media*, which publishes *Worth Magazine*, summarizes it beautifully.

“Among those who buy these products, the rich are not created equal. There are certain spenders and certain savers, and they have a totally different money personality.” (Advertising Age v 72 no24 June 11 2001. p. S1, S11, Brands Pursue Old, New Money)

Reflections at Last

To summarize, the Ziccardi Advertising agency has figured out that certain brands and images appeal to certain people because of the qualities that are associated with them. The production cost of making an Ellen Tracy shirt is fairly low. It is the Ellen Tracy label that makes it chic and expensive.

Our next example is Pelle Pelle, a men's luxury clothing brand that used a similar approach for its image personality. Pelle Pelle has launched a line of women's clothing focussed on outerwear and leather items.

"The women's collection will target 'career women' age 18-25 and older with active social lives and an eye for luxury goods."

Again, we see personality traits possessed by career women between the ages of 18-25 possess. Pelle Pelle then creates advertising images that match those traits. Pelle Pelle wouldn't try to push pants and blazers onto housewives who have a completely different perception and mental model of themselves because the mirror wouldn't reflect a complimentary persona.

Images are repeated across multiple media forms: magazines, television, newspapers, radio, billboards, the Internet, and so on. We recognize images from one media to another and through repetition they become familiar. The reflections come at us from different angles in different forms, yet they are the same. The accompanying Flash animation shows the same few images, but in different colors and shapes, so they seem different, but yet familiar. This is what is done with image personalities. This series of images forms a hypnotic repetition, which seems to tell a story, and we end up watching.

Conclusion

In short, both Ellen Tracy and Pelle Pelle show a correlation between image personalities and the brands that personify these personalities. Claritas' clustering system is the proven methodology for product image branding.

By using photo models, clothes, accessories, cars, lifestyle types, and media such as TV shows, newspapers, bill boards, the Web, radio, and magazines that compliment their image personas, the concept of mirroring these personas is enhanced and strengthened, even to the demographic member who doesn't quite match the ideal persona.

In short, every image seen around us, from fashions to household goods, has been conceived from an existing personality type.