The Evolution of Easy, Breezy, Beautiful
An examination of the CoverGirl Makeup Brand and Its Changes Over Time

Hunter Williams
Advisor: Dr. Hongmei Li

Introduction

- CoverGirl is one of the most popular cosmetics brands in America. Their makeup is sold at drug stores at affordable prices.
- Their print ads featuring "cover girls" are iconic, contributing to the brand's recognition.
- CoverGirl also thrives on the "girl next door" vibe and executes this feel in its various print, digital, and television advertisements.

Purpose

- The purpose of this research is to examine how CoverGirl has changed over time in regards to advertisements and its target audience demographic.
- Research questions asked include:
  - How has the CoverGirl brand changed and evolved over time?
  - What are the aspects that have remained constant?

Product History

- CoverGirl was founded in 1961 by Noxzema Chemical Corporation promoting medicated makeup.
- In 1989, Proctor & Gamble purchased the CoverGirl brand.
- Over time, CoverGirl has expanded its line to include foundations, mascaras, eye shadows, eyeliners, nail polishes, lipsticks, and glosses.

Psychographics

- CoverGirl prides themselves on being trendy in regards to their products and marketing strategy.
  - In addition to print advertisements and commercial spots, CoverGirl uses their website and social media to connect with consumers.
- The term "girl" in CoverGirl is used to keep the brand fresh and give it a youthful feel, regardless of the product or age for which it is intended.
  - Many women strive to have a younger appearance.

Demographics

- CoverGirl typically targets females ranging in ages from 18-45.
  - Recently, CoverGirl has expanded their target audience to girls ages 12-17 to create brand loyalty from a young age.
  - On the other end of the spectrum, CoverGirl also targets middle-aged women with products such as their Simply Ageless line.
- CoverGirl is very inclusive in regards to race and ethnicity. They make products for women of all colors and include women of various ethnicities in their advertisements, such as African Americans and Latinas.
- To target women with a modest income, CoverGirl products are moderately priced.

Theoretical Framework

- 3 levels of meaning in an advertisement:
  - Surface meaning – listing the elements of an advertisement
  - Advertiser's intended meaning – what the advertiser wants the take away message to be
  - Cultural/Ideological meaning – relies on our cultural knowledge
- Semiotics – "the science of signs"
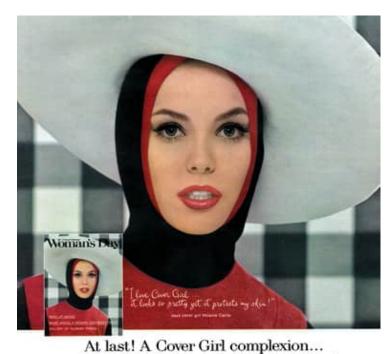 - Sign – anything that can stand for something else and generate meaning

Key Findings

- Surface meaning
  - Collectively, the ads all feature an attractive spokeswoman, an image of the product being advertised, and text.
- Advertiser's intended meaning
  - The overarching message of the ads is "purchase this CoverGirl product and you will be able to look like the spokeswomen in the ad."
- Cultural meaning
  - Female beauty is important in American culture.
- All of these levels of meaning and semiotics work together to decode various messages in CoverGirl advertisements.

Discussion & Conclusion

- This research found that CoverGirl has built a successful brand that is widely recognizable by consumers.
  - Using similar formatting in print advertisements contributes to CoverGirl's brand recognition.
- Even though CoverGirl has a defined demographic that it targets, the brand is willing to expand beyond in advertisements and products.
  - Includes women of color and different age groups.

Advertisements

- CoverGirl print advertisements have been relatively consistent over time. The ads typically feature an attractive female and the product being marketed.
- Furthermore, CoverGirl includes women of different ethnicities in their advertisements such as African Americans or Latinas.
- The women in the ads are what we consider to be "conventionally beautiful" in America
  - They have straight white teeth, are relatively thin, and have flawless complexions.

Advertisements by the Decade

1963

1976

1987

2006

2015