

## **MIRROR, MIRROR: SOME POSTMODERN REFLECTIONS ON GLOBAL ADVERTISING**

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**ABSTRACT:** Global advertising succeeds when it is perceived in semiotically-equivalent ways by multicultural consumer segments. Before campaigns can be standardized, it is necessary to identify segments of consumers who share an ethos, since this represents the foundation for creating advertising executions that can be understood multiculturally. This paper develops the argument that fashion and food products — what people put on and in their bodies—enable the universally-held need of self-expression, and in that sense their perceptions are thereby driven by a common ethos. Certain consumers, apart from their resident cultures, regard these products in essentially equivalent, self-relevant ways, so they are prime candidates for global, if not wholly standardized, advertising. Two multicultural segments for which these products are especially self-relevant are identified: (1) the world's economically-elite consumers (a segment which has been widely recognized); and (2) the post-World-War-II generations of consumers in Western societies (a "postmodern" segment, which is only coming into recognition). Using both content analysis and semiotic interpretation, international print advertising for fashion and food products aimed at the latter segment is illustrated, with a view toward explaining what makes it multiculturally understood (and, in that sense, "effective"). Overall, this stimulus-side analysis demonstrates the use of semiotics as a way of thinking about global advertising, particularly in an imagistic postmodern world.

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