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Activity levels of the mature market in magazine advertisements : 1980 to 1995

Girard T. Burke
San Jose State University

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**ACTIVITY LEVELS OF THE MATURE MARKET
IN MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS:
1980 TO 1995**

**A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Journalism
and Mass Communications
San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science**

**by
Girard T. Burke
December 1996**

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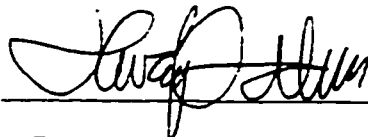
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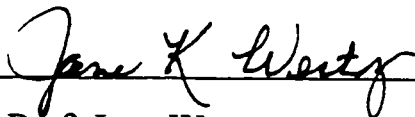
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS



Prof. Cecelia Baldwin



Dr. Harvey Gotliffe



Prof. Jane Wertz

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



ABSTRACT

ACTIVITY LEVELS OF THE MATURE MARKET
IN MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS:
1980 TO 1995

by Girard Timothy Burke

This study examined the activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements for 1980 and 1995 in seven national, high circulation magazines: *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, *Family Circle*, *Fortune*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Esquire*.

The results of this study showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the increased activity level portrayal of the mature market in advertisements although the descriptive analysis revealed only a slight difference. Moreover, the mature market has been depicted more frequently in higher level activities advertisements and less frequently in lower level activity advertisements.

All advertisements that portrayed the mature market persons have proportionately decreased. Although the medium activity level in product/service advertisements remained the most frequent, medium activity level product/service advertisements had largely decreased and both higher and lower activity level product/service advertisements had increased.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother and father, Lorraine and John Burke: to my mother, for her ceaseless courage, faith, belief, and ability to teach through example; and to my father, who believed that progress and persistency were synonymous.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Advertising transfers meanings through messages, and this contributes to activity level involvement among mature market persons (Atchley, 1994). The relationship between the understanding of the world and the placement of people in it is created through their interactions and involvement with media symbols (Baran & Davis, 1995). During this current time of social transformation, when the population is aging and demographics are changing, it is important to recognize how the mature market is being portrayed in advertising. The mature market is defined as those persons who are over 55.

Three key causal forces have accounted for this major change in demographics. One, Americans are living longer. Two, the birth dearth--the fertility rate is declining. And lastly, the Baby-boomers are aging. As a result, there is a boom in people over 55 years of age (Dychtwald, 1989; Sperry, 1992), and sociologists predict that Baby-boomers will redefine old age just as they redefined every other age group they have experienced (Tschudy, 1994).

Life expectancy has increased considerably over the years. In 1900, for example, life expectancy in the United States was 48.3 years for women and 46.3 years for men. By 1985, life expectancy increased to 78.3 years for women and 71.3 years for men. Moreover, each day in the United States there is a net gain of about 1,400 persons who reach age 65.

The current generation of mature market people in the United States is more numerous, healthier, better educated, and more affluent than in the past, and this trend will continue (Dychtwald, 1989). In fact, when the

Baby-boomers, the 76 million persons born between 1946 and 1964, began turning 50 in 1996, they will be even better educated, more affluent and healthier than any generation in the history of America. Of significance to advertisers is the fact that combined incomes of mature market persons are more than \$800 billion with its members controlling 70% of the total net worth of all Americans (Stoeger, 1994). Furthermore, over half of all discretionary spending power is accounted for by those over 50 years of age (Linden, 1985).

The dramatic reshaping of the demography of the population is epitomized in predictions by several government sources: By the year 2010, for example, more than one-quarter of the total U.S. population will be over 55, and one in seven persons will be at least 65 (U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, 1988). Moreover, by 2050, at least half the population will be 43 years or older, and if the levels of fertility and mortality are lower than this projection, half the population could be 50 or older by the year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990).

Overall, the 50-plus age group will grow 74% while the group younger than 50 will increase only 1% during the next 25 years (Tschudy, 1994). This suggests that our society is no longer dominated by the youth culture (Dychtwald, 1989), and accordingly, these figures suggest that we are experiencing a transformation in the profile of our population (Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1990).

With the bulk of the Baby-boom population transcending into the mature market segment of our population, what advertising messages and images are they, and others, receiving about the lifestyles and activities of the mature market?

Advertising's role is that of a vehicle of communication that works to sell through persuasion and imagery (Pease, 1985), and the relationship between advertising and how perceptions reveal meaning in one's lives is described through semiotic theory. From a semiotic perspective, meaning is dependent on the way signs are organized internally in an advertisement and on the relationship of the advertisement to the person's external belief systems (Williamson, 1978). Semiology is the study of signs, and signs are things that have meaning which communicate messages to people (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1986).

Moreover, the social communication of advertising offers messages that symbolically link people as representatives of social structures and processes (Pease, 1985). Social scientists have employed semiotic theory to discern the values and beliefs that are widely shared among the public (Pease, 1985). For example, both Pease (1985) and Leiss et al. (1986) have studied the implicit and explicit social statements present in advertising. Leiss et al. (1986) concluded that the advertising message contains two levels of meaning: the explicit surface message and the implicit message below the surface.

The gerontologist, Kart (1985), contended that myths and stereotypes of the mature market people are transmitted through the mass media, and Atchley (1994), another prominent social gerontologist, confirmed that some people learn what to think about aging from their exposure to advertising and media portrayals. For example, in a landmark study of the portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements by Nussbaum, Thompson and Robinson (1989), the researchers concluded that stereotypical attitudes can and do impact the quality of life for mature market persons and others, and

that advertising may be a significant factor in the creation and maintenance of such attitudes.

From activity level studies of the mature market (Palmore, 1968; Palmore, Nowlin & Wang, 1985; Atchley, 1994), it was concluded that decreases in activities are determined more by poor health and poor socioeconomic conditions than by aging. Advertising studies have demonstrated that although the frequency and portrayals of the mature market in some instances have slightly increased (Davis & Davis, 1985), the overall portrayals of the mature market are inconsistent and inaccurate (Nussbaum et al., 1989; Kvasnicka, Beymer, & Perloff, 1982; Gantz, Gartenberg, & Rainbow, 1980). Gerontology activity level studies have confirmed that activity levels of the mature market are relatively similar to other age groups, and they will continue to increase throughout time (Atchley, 1994; Palmore, 1981).

Activities levels of mature market persons may be explained by social gerontology theories. Nussbaum, Thompson and Robinson (1989) asserted that the creation and maintenance of attitudes that impact the quality of life for the mature market person may be significantly linked to advertising and mass media.

Semiotic theory is utilized to explain how individual roles and identities are partly determined through the transference of meaning through the advertising of products. Eventually, the labels persons ascribe and receive about the mature market may result in both positive and negative self-fulfilling prophecies (Cox, 1993; Kuypers and Bengtson, 1973).

During the 1970s and mid-1980s, advertising researchers asserted that there was a need to increase the accuracy and frequency of the portrayal of

the mature market, and that if not done, then there would be grave consequences for everyone involved. Nevertheless, there have not been recent follow-up studies in advertising research. In fact, there has never been a study comparing the changes in the portrayal of activity levels of the mature market in magazine advertisements.

Social gerontology theories, semiotic theory related to advertising, activity studies in gerontology, research of the mature market in advertising, and the relationship between advertising and product consumption will provide the framework for the study of activity level portrayals of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines.

This study will be a content analysis of advertising portrayals of activity levels of the mature segment in seven national magazines: *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, *Family Circle*, *Fortune*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Esquire*. Additionally, this study, for the time period 1980-1995, will provide concrete, measurable information that can be utilized to gauge any progress the advertising industry has made during this rapidly changing period of transition.

Significance and Value of the Study

The study of the activity level portrayals of mature market persons should be of interest to advertisers in particular, and others in the fields of media, marketing, social gerontology and their related interdisciplinary fields. This research will add to the body of knowledge and fill a gap in the available literature about the portrayals of activity levels of the mature segment in national, high circulation magazine advertisements. Marketing professionals might apply the results of this study to their decision-making process when implementing communication plans for reaching specific target segments of

the mature population. Furthermore, understanding the roles that accompany aging may improve advertising effectiveness (Schewe and Balazs, 1992).

From a humanitarian perspective, accurate portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertising might encourage activity and continuity for those who might have otherwise subscribed to societal disengagement. As Dychtwald (1989) pointed out, advertising can play a role in improving society's perceptions of the mature market person, and consequently, this may improve their images of themselves.

This study is significant because it addresses the psychological implications of the inaccurate portrayal of the mature market person in advertising. Inaccurate advertising portrayals of mature market persons accentuates misconceptions during a period where dramatic changes in the activity levels needs to be recognized by individuals, media practitioners, and society.

Purpose of the Study

The literature provides evidence that although small increases in the portrayals of the mature market in magazine advertisements have occurred in specialized magazines (Kvasnicka, Beymer, & Perloff, 1982), there has not been an account of any evidence to support the much needed data that measures whether the increases in activity levels has increased by the mature market in national magazine advertising over the last 15 years. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how the activity levels of the mature market have been portrayed in advertising in national, high circulation, magazines from 1980 to 1995.

Research Questions

Overall, one specific and vital research question will be explored:
Have national, high circulation magazine advertisements shown changes in the activity level portrayal by the mature market during the last 15 years?

Additionally, this study will be designed to answer the subsequent inquiries about previously unmeasured areas of portrayals of activity levels of the mature market in current national, high circulation magazine advertisements:

1. In product/service advertisements of the mature market, what is the relationship between *products/services categories* and the *activity level* involvement?
2. What *specific types of activities* are the mature market portrayed in?
3. Have there been changes in the frequency and distribution patterns (trends) in magazine advertisements of the mature market in specific types of activity levels over the 15 year time period?
4. What are the portrayals of the mature market in *specific types of product/service* advertisements?
5. In magazine advertisements of specific types of product/services, have there been changes in the frequency and distribution patterns (trends) of the portrayal of the mature market in the last 15 years?
6. Has there been an increase or decrease in the amount of mature market people in magazine advertisements during the last 15 years?
7. What is the *percentage of mature market persons in magazine advertisements* compared to the total number of people in all advertisements?

8. What is the *percentage of magazine advertisements that portray mature market persons* compared to the percentage of magazine advertisements that portray all other market segments?

9. And, what is the gender ratio of the mature market in magazine advertisements?

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Aspects of the Mature Market

The researcher will elucidate the seemingly ambiguous nature of language, chronological age versus cognitive age, casual factors, and ageist concepts as they pertain to the mature market.

The Importance of Language

Meanings, ideas, and images are conveyed through language. The researcher is especially concerned with proper usage of terms in reference to people who are 55 or over without carrying negative implications. A survey by Barbato and Feezel (1987) and a poll by Louis Harris and Associates (1981) about the attitudes toward different terms for aging among all age groups revealed that the most preferred terms were mature American, senior citizen, and retired person, respectively. Moreover, when mature market persons were requested to choose only one designation that they preferred, their first choice was, senior citizen; when more choices were allowed, their second, third, and fourth were mature American, retired person, and golden ager, respectively (Kalab, 1985).

It was concluded that all age groups agreed that terms such as aged, elderly, and old had negative connotations of declining activity or frailty, and most people over 55 do not want to be referred to by any of these labels (Barbado & Feezel, 1987). Therefore, in advertising, the term mature market evolved and prevailed as the most appropriate term for those who are over 55 years of age.

Several nicknames have been used by society and marketing practitioners in reference to mature market persons such as greedy geezers -

wealthy, political powerful and prospering at the direct expense of younger and future generations (Minkler & Estes, 1991; Atchley, 1994), and acronyms such as Woopies (well-off older people), Jollies (jet-setting oldsters with loads of loot) and Glams (graying, leisured affluent, middle-aged) (Blaikie, 1993). Rosenthal (1992) metaphorically categorized mature market consumers (those over 65) as go-gos (the most energetic seniors), no-gos (the least able to manage activity), and the slow-gos (falls somewhere between the two groups). Furthermore, Nuessel (1982) identified more than 70 terms, such as coot, fossil, and geezer which referred to older people in negative ways.

Croese (1992) emphatically contended that consistently using the word elderly as a generic term for all people past their middle years is ageist and promotes stereotyping of older people as feeble, depleted, and ancient. Originally, Kalab (1985) asserted that any phrase or reference containing the word old is an insult to the mature market person; yet, eventually, even Kalab (1985) settled for usage of the term older adult which exemplified the lack of approved terminology for acceptable references to mature market persons.

However, most recent academic, marketing, and advertising journals reference the 55-plus age group (some even begin at 50) as the mature market (Harris, 1988; Morgan & Levy, 1993; Conaway, 1994). Therefore, the researcher utilized the most current and socially correct term, the mature market, for reference to all people 55+ years of age.

Chronological Age Categories

There is a gradual transition as one crosses from youth, to middle age, to old age (Botwinick, 1981). We may recognize the differences between 15-year-olds and 35-year olds, but we often overlook the difference between those who are fifty-five and those who are seventy-five (Kart, 1985). Wolfe

(1990) argued that "adult development causes mature adults to become more individuated and to be less susceptible to the herd instinct compared to teenagers and young adults" (p. 202).

The psychologist, Neugarten (1974; 1975), suggested that older adults be divided into two groups; the young-old, ranging from 55-75 years old, and the old-old, consisting of people over 75 years old. The young-old are healthier, wealthier, and better educated than the old-old and their views about life and their experiences are very different

The most recognized age segmentation was developed by Lazer (1986). The researcher suggested that age segmentation should be divided into four separate groups: the young old (55 to 64), the middle old (65 to 74), the senior sector (75 to 84), and the very old (85+).

Since it is recognized that chronological definitions and age categories have severe limitations (Atchley, 1994), the more numerous the differentiated subsegments, the more we can learn about people over 55 and better implement an accurate portrayal of the mature market in advertising.

Chronological and Cognitive Age

It is difficult to define the mature market segment of the population who are more than 55 years of age. Although they sometimes are epitomized as a numerical categorization, the mature market segment is complex and diverse. The government arbitrarily selects stages of chronological definitions for ascertaining the age one will be eligible to receive specific program benefits; Palmore (1990) pointed out that there is neither a legal consensus nor a popular consensus of the defining year in which most people change from middle-age to old-age. Atchley (1972) concluded that although a symptomatic approach to defining the stages of later life is preferable to a

chronological approach, the field of social gerontology is forced to continue to use chronological age as the operational definition of these stages because no one has devised a satisfactory method of identifying the mature market symptomatically (cognitive age).

It is important to understand the differences between cognitive and chronological age (Lunsford & Burnett, 1992). Chronological aging is the time that elapses from birth: it is calendar age (Atchley, 1994). It assumes importance by providing others with ideas about patterns of behavior and roles expected of people at particular age groups (Cox, 1993). Yet, cognitive age is the age one perceives one's self to be and is considered an element of self-concept (Wylie, 1974, Blau, 1956).

Advertisers who do not think of the mature market in terms of actual age and instead consider their cognitive age will more successfully target and reach these mature market persons according to their interests and activities (Sandage, Fryburger & Rotzoll, 1989; Stephens, 1991). Furthermore, a major implication of chronological age segmentation is that the marketers may be unaware of the true psychological make-up of these consumers by ignoring their cognitive ages (Van Auken, Barry & Anderson, 1993). Van Auken et al. (1993) cautioned that "stereotypical portrayals of the mature and aging are likely to be inappropriate, leading to the use of ineffective advertising and promotional strategies and tactics" (p. 82).

Mature market consumers usually have psychological ages that are much younger than their chronological ages (Roark, 1989). For example, data collected on 323 mature consumers (ages 56-87) revealed their cognitive age to be 13.5 years less than their chronological age (Van Auken et al., 1993), and Underhill and Cadwell (1983) reported that more than half of adults over

60 feel 16-17 years younger. Therefore, advertisers who target the 55-plus adult have been advised to use people in their ads who are 10-15 years younger than their target (Loro, 1989), and avoid portraying the mature market as sick, useless, and powerless (Diddlebock, 1989).

To create advertising that works, Zinkhan and Hong (1991) suggested that clarifying the customers' self-concepts is extremely important, and Stephens (1991) asserted that some companies have realized that "societal stereotypes of older people are not necessarily held by older people themselves" (p. 37). These youthful feelings are relevant to advertising strategy (Loro, 1989; Berger, 1987).

Because the mature market members are a subculture in transition, Shiffman and Sherman (1991) suggested that advertising practitioners and scholars advance beyond yesterday's age role portrayals that "commonly associate the elderly with products and services targeted to a specific corresponding chronological age grouping" (p. 193). The researchers concluded that age should be defined in terms of value orientations, life satisfaction adjustments, life-styles (i.e., new activities and interests), as well as cognitive age.

Causal Factors

In addition to reasons for demographic changes in the United States such as previous high birth rates (Baby-boomers), the current low birth rates (baby bust), and longer life expectancy, there are two main factors that are responsible for establishing society's conceptions of the mature market. First, the Social Security Act of 1935 permitted the U.S. government to set 62 1/2 as the legal definition as to when one is allowed to collect social security checks. Since then, this arbitrarily chosen age has become a social definition

for aging (Cox, 1993). As a result, the second factor is the unjust amalgamation of all mature market members into one homogeneous age category, and consequently, this has perpetuated societal misconception.

Ageism: Age Discrimination and Prejudice

Palmore (1990) defined ageism as prejudice or discrimination against or in favor of an age group. Preconceived favorable stereotypes of the mature market could be detrimental to the aging process because it could nullify the existence of individuality. When people hold negative stereotypes against the mature market members or when they have negative attitudes toward that group, they are prejudiced; whereas, discrimination against the mature market is the negative treatment of members of that group.

Ageism, or age prejudice, is defined by Comfort (1976) as the dislike of older people or aging based on the belief that aging makes people unattractive, unemployable, asexual, mentally incompetent, and unintelligent. It eventually leads to the systematic discrimination and stereotyping of people because they are old (Fillmer & Meadows, 1986). Furthermore, Atchley (1994) specified that age discrimination occurs when human beings are excluded from everyday activity because they are considered the wrong age.

The relationship between ageism and the study of the advertising medium is important because ageist portrayals could influence one's perceptions about the mature market. Studies of mass media content determined that by the 1980s, space previously occupied by discrimination issues such as racism and sexism began to decline as ageism issues increased. For example, ageist issues occupied about two-thirds of this space (Naisbitt, 1982).

In conclusion, Kalab (1985) pointed out that older people must seek to end ageism, just as there was a revolt against racism. Maggie Kuhn, for example, established the Gray Panthers which is a group dedicated to the eradication of ageism and age discrimination.

Media usage of the mature market

Mature market persons spend much of their leisure time with media. Studies have found the mature market segment of 65-plus spend nearly 50% of their day with the media, and most of this time is spent watching television. Other studies indicate that mature market persons spend about 30 minutes a day reading. In a study on media usage (Kelly, 1993), the researcher found that television is the leading pastime of middle-aged and older people in the United States.

Academia has also contributed to the understanding of the aging process through developed social gerontology theories that explain the relationship between aging and levels of activity of mature market persons in society.

Social Gerontology Theories

Social gerontology theories define how activities vary among mature market persons. Disengagement theory, activity theory, and modernization theory provide a macro-level, functionalist's view of the aging process where mature market persons are subject to societal norms that require them either to disengage, to remain active, or to cope with reduced status because of modernization (Cockerham, 1991); whereas, the micro-level orientation which is limited to explaining personality adjustments during the aging process is the continuity theory (Cockerham, 1991).

Disengagement Theory

Cumming and Henry (1961) stated that aging involves an inevitable withdrawal, or disengagement, resulting in decreased interaction with those in the aging person's social milieu, and this might be initiated by the social system or the individual (Cox, 1993). Furthermore, role losses, specifically major life roles, are the key problems for people as they age. Eventually, people of the mature market experience diminished interaction and withdrawal from previous activities (Cox, 1993). Several researchers and social scientists were so irritated by the basic claims of disengagement theory that they have spent enormous efforts refuting its underlying principles (Ferraro, 1990).

Activity Theory

Activity theory almost diametrically opposes disengagement theory. Havighurst (1963) asserted that normal aging is an action theory for successful aging. It is based on three premises: one, that the majority of normally aging people will maintain a fairly constant level of activity; two, that the amount of engagement or disengagement will be influenced by socioeconomic factors and past lifestyles; and three, substantial levels of social, physical, and mental activity must be maintained if the aging experience is to be successful. Conclusively, the concept of activity theory involves maintaining as long as possible the activities and attitudes of middle age.

In essence, the implication drawn from activity theory is that one will substitute activities and roles for those in which one is forced to give up during the aging process (Cox, 1993; Atchley, 1994). Cockerham (1991) reiterated Havighurst's (1963) claim that activity theory is based on the

concept that middle-age norms of activity constitute the standards by which people are judged, and that there is a positive relationship between activity and life satisfaction.

Continuity Theory

In continuity theory, decisions regarding which role to maintain and which to discard are determined by the individual (Cox, 1993). This theory is based on the continuity of behavior patterns through various life phases (Cox, 1993) whereby the mature market person strives to maintain desired roles and activities in the social system for as long as possible (McCrae & Costa, 1984).

The founders of this theory (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961), postulated that each individual's personality determines successful aging, and that this is dependent upon the individual's ability to maintain consistency (Nussbaum, Thompson & Robinson, 1989). Atchley (1994) noted several studies relating continuity to activities (Kunkel, 1989; Atchley, 1993; Kelly & Westcott, 1991).

Modernization Theory

Modernization theory provides an important perspective on the aging process in developed societies because it explains how and why these societies have formulated negative norms and values concerning the mature market and their social roles (Cockerham, 1991). In technologically advanced societies, people who are defined as older are usually given marginal economic and social positions because society is oriented toward achievement, activity, and production (Cockerham, 1991); consequently, mature market people feel that the most important work should be done by younger people (Cowgill, 1986).

Although the modernization theory helps explain why modern societies have generally devalued the mature market persons, Cowgill (1986) adamantly concluded that these patterns are changing as a larger percentage of our society matures and becomes over 55 years old. In the process, the mature segment of society will gain status.

Concept of Overlapping Theories

The mature segment has a tendency to participate in a variety of activities in several domains of their lives which are explained through a variety of social theories (Fry, 1992). In advocating the interrelationships among theories, Fry (1992) asserted that "the choice to disengage in one domain of life (e.g., politics) while maintaining continuity in another (e.g., family) and increasing activities in a third (e.g., friendships) is viable" (p. 329).

Semiotic Theory and Ad Imagery

Advertising is based on perceptions and our perceptions reveal meaning in our lives. Semiology is the study of signs, and signs are things that have a meaning, that communicate messages to people (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1986). Signs are organized and related to each other from within the ad and through external references to wider belief systems (Leiss et al., 1986). In addition, Leiss et al. (1986) explained that "every message contains two levels of meaning, what it says explicitly on the surface and what it says implicitly below" (p. 156). It is the interrelationship between the sender, the message, and the receiver that interests the researcher.

Semiology is appropriate for the study of contemporary advertising because it describes how we derive meaning from the message (Leiss et al., 1986). Williamson (1978) claimed that advertising created meaning. Sherry

(1985) contended that advertising also discerns and discovers meaning, and that "advertising is a cultural document, a way of presenting and apprehending the world" (p. 1).

People elicit references from the external world to understand the ad, and their experiences and expectations interact with the communicator's output to determine the meaning of the communication. Williamson (1978) observed that a sign is a simple thing which has a unique meaning to a person or a group of people. Leiss et al. (1986) noted that:

A sign within a system of meaning may be separated into two components, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the material vehicle of meaning; the signified actually is the meaning. The signifier is its concrete dimension; the signified is the abstract side. While we can separate the two for analytical purposes, in reality they are inseparable. (p. 152)

The authors (Leiss et al., 1986) provided an example of how semiotics works: a rose signifies romance or passionate love in most western cultures, and the meaning of roses in our culture is involved with the idea of passion:

In analytical terms, then, we have three elements in the communicative process: (1) the signifier--rose; (2) the signified--passion; (3) the sign--their unity as passionified roses. One of semiology's most important points is the distinction between the signifier and the sign: They are not the same, although they appear to be the same. Nothing inherent in roses limits their meaning to passion alone. (p. 152)

Likewise, creators of advertisements attempt to turn signifiers (goods) into meaningful signs that will evoke purchases (Leiss et al., 1986).

Therefore, Kausak & Sen (1990) noted de Saussure's (1974) conclusion that a sign is a particular thing in addition to its meaning.

Memories from associated experiences (Blumenthal, 1984; Eco, 1986) are what guide the sign interpreter's perception of meanings of message

content. Blumenthal (1989) asserted that the creator of messages personalizes them in the same process as when the symbol is originally interpreted, and this cycle continues indefinitely.

Referent systems are the systems of meaning from which we gather the materials to complete the transfer of messages, and referent systems are based on mass media playing the role as one type of mediator. Jhally (1987) maintained that people depend upon the meaning of advertisements to provide the definition of their social lives, and advertisers depend upon people's knowledge of referent systems for the operation of meaning. Advertisers need to understand the social and cultural knowledge maintained by audiences to accurately transform the content of the material into message (encode) for the audience to properly decode the message (Jhally, 1987).

The perception of pictures and of reality is a learned activity and learning draws from deep and fallible past experiences (Goffman, 1976). Media sources give us sets of cues, and frames that guide our unconscious thought processes and our perceptions about the world in which we live (Davis & Baran, 1981). The relationship between external belief systems and the internal organization of signs in the ad determines the meaning of the message (Jhally, 1987).

Mick (1986) identified two forms of semiotics in meaning-producing events: one, a general semiotics that inquires about the nature of meaning; and two, a specific semiotics that examines how our reality—words, gestures, myths, product/services, theories—acquire meaning. To address these questions, semioticians have investigated the sign systems or codes essential to all types of communication. Codes of advertising are defined by Jhally

(1987) as the relationship between the referent systems of the audience and the constructs of advertising. Jhally (1987) concluded that:

The concept that unifies the different elements of the process of meaning construction (referent systems, ceremony/display, connotation) is that of code. A code is the store of experiences upon which both the advertiser and the audience draw in their participation in the construction of commodity meaning ... a code as a set of rules or an interpretive device known to both transmitter and receiver, which assigns a certain meaning or content to a certain sign. (p. 140)

In summary, most objects are shared objects that are represented in the selection process by individuals that manifest in common patterns of activity (Jhally, 1987).

Labeling Theory

The basic assertion behind labeling theory is that one derives a concept of self from interaction with other people in one's social milieu, and that we determine our concepts about ourselves based on how others define us and react to us (Cox, 1993). Therefore, the behavior of the mature market is largely determined by the norms of the social group to which they belong. Cox (1993) contended that once people have placed us in distinct categories, their reaction to us establishes our self-concept and our behavior.

In a study by Russell (1984), it was concluded that labeled persons find their various role identities restricted and limited by others. The role a person has available to make in a given situation are limited by the roles made by others and by others' definitions of the situation (Russell, 1984).

Two models that were built on the concepts of the labeling theory perspective illustrate how self-concept and behavior are formed as a result of the complex interplay between the mature market persons and their social environment.

Ancillary Models

Social Breakdown Syndrome

In regard to self-concept and the aging process, Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) suggested that the aging process can be characterized as a social breakdown syndrome (Zusman, 1966) in which older persons are systematically deprived of valued attachments to the social structure, labeled as incompetent; they then internalize those negative labels into their self-perceptions, and experience atrophy of skills as a result of the labeling process and its internalization. The atrophy of skills then becomes evidence that seemingly justifies the negative labeling, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of the social breakdown syndrome (Palmore & Busse, 1985).

Application of the Social Breakdown Model

Kuypers and Bengtson (1973) applied the social breakdown model to the mature person by theorizing the following:

1. The individual is likely to be susceptible to and dependent on social labeling because of the nature of social reorganization in later life. Factors such as role loss, vague and inappropriate normative information, and lack of reference groups all serve to deprive the individual of feedback concerning personal identity.
2. This feedback vacuum creates a vulnerability to, and dependence on, external sources of self-labeling, many of which communicate a stereotypic portrayal of the mature market person as useless or obsolete.
3. The individual who accepts such negative labeling is then inducted into the negative, dependent position--learning to act like old people are supposed to act--and previous skills of independence atrophy.

4. The 55-plus persons accept the external labeling and identify themselves as inadequate, thereby setting the stage for another vicious spiral.

In summary, Salmon (1981) reiterated Zusman (1966), Kuypers and Bengston (1973) who maintained that, when older persons are exposed to negative attitudes toward aging, they tend to internalize these negative feelings and labels. Eventually, they might begin to create negative generalizations toward broad areas of their lives.

The subtle approaches in advertising may influence misconceptions of the mature market, and consequently, all message recipients might become part of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, this creates a need for a more accurate portrayal of activity levels of the mature segment in advertising so that they may assist in the development of a more positive and accurate construction of self-images.

The social reconstruction model offered by Kuypers and Bengston (1973) is a solution oriented approach to repair the damage done from the concepts of the social breakdown model. The model's premise is to encourage professionals, including advertisers, to assist mature market persons to reconstruct a positive self-image.

Advertising Portrayals of the Mature Market

Studies

Studies that have monitored advertising portrayals of the mature market include investigations by Nussbaum and Robinson (1986), Kvasnicka, Beymer, and Perloff (1982), Gantz, Gartenberg and Rainbow (1980), Korzenny and Neuendorf (1980), Swayne and Greco (1987), and Ursic, Ursic, and Ursic (1986). The value of these studies shows the need for understanding the relationship between the role portrayal of the mature

market in advertising and the audience's interpretations and conceptions derived from exposure to the advertisements.

Myths and stereotypes of the mature segment are transmitted through the mass media (Kart, 1985), and some people learn what to think about aging from their exposure to media portrayals (Atchley, 1994). Dresden-Grambs (1989) suggested that "how we view ourselves is derived from our perceptions of how others view us ... the most important source of information regarding how we ought to be is derived from mass media" (p. 20). Even mature market persons internalize stereotypical portrayals and eventually can believe them of themselves (Kalish, 1979; Kaiser and Chandler, 1988). Even more alarming is that some mature market persons do not view negative portrayals in media as inappropriate (Kubey, 1980; Schreiber and Boyd, 1980), and, "their acceptance of a less-than-positive self-portrayal in roles could have a subconscious negative impact on their self-perception" (Bernhardt, 1981, p. 124). Comfort (1983) adamantly concluded that on reaching a more mature age, we may become prejudiced against ourselves.

In explaining the perpetual cycle of role observation to role enactment, Fillmer and Meadows (1986) maintained that:

In all types of stereotyping, everyone becomes a victim. In the case of ageism, the self-concepts of older persons suffer when the media portray them as ill, tired, forgetful, grouchy, withdrawn, isolated, and unproductive. Younger persons are negatively affected because their stereotyping of the elderly becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as they grow older. They inflict their prejudices against the elderly on themselves, and thus against growing older. (p. 658)

With the bulk of the Baby-boom population transcending into the mature segment of our population, what messages about the lifestyles and

activities of mature market persons is society receiving from the advertising? Progress has been made towards a better understanding of how mature market persons react to advertising portrayals (Day, Davis, Dove, & French, 1987; Davis & French, 1989). There are some indications that the advertising portrayals of the mature market are moving in a positive direction (Atchley, 1994; Greco, 1988). Although a limited number of studies have indicated less ageist portrayals of the mature market person, Anaya (1988) counterpositioned that advertisers are substituting advertisements from the past for a new stereotypical portrayal of the hyperactive, athletic senior. As the research confirmed, this continues to portray mature market persons as a homogeneous population which perpetuates the deleterious portrayal of the mature market in advertising.

A survey by Greco (1988) where he compared research results from Harris and Feinberg (1977) versus Swayne and Greco (1987), and Gantz et al. (1980) versus Ursic et al. (1986) revealed that "practitioners and academicians generally agree that stereotyping of the elderly does occur," but, "current portrayals of the elderly are usually perceived as less negative than those of the past" (p. 44). Mature market persons were portrayed as less physically active and less healthy in television commercials (Harris & Feinberg, 1977). Nussbaum and Robinson (1986) concluded that the portrayal of the mature market in magazine articles between 1970 and 1979 did not improve; moreover, the articles actually became increasingly negative with less effort to eliminate existing stereotypes.

Overall, researchers (Nussbaum et al., 1989) have studied how the mature market are portrayed in advertising, and they have concluded that the majority of advertising portrayals of the mature segment have been

stereotypical. Furthermore, advertising has either perpetuated common myths or they have done little to dispel them (Nussbaum et al., 1989).

Gender Portrayal of the Mature Market

There is an increasing divergence in the life expectancy of women and men in America: the gender ratio increases with age, and the fastest growing age group is women over 80. By the year 2000, there will be an estimated 65 males for every 100 females ages 65 and older (American Association of Retired Persons, 1987). Dresden-Grambs (1989) noted that older women, as a group, age differently; they have a different set of social and personal priorities, and they confront personal and social problems differently than men. Dresden-Grambs (1989) asserted that "the mythology of past centuries has been replaced by the mythology of contemporary mass media" (p. 20).

In 1987, Cantor evaluated the representation of women in television and film and concluded that although women outnumber men in the mature market population, women are severely underrepresented on prime-time television. In a study by Petersen (1973), the researcher noted that a viewer would have to wait between four and five hours to view mature market women while waiting only 22 minutes to encounter mature market men. Petersen (1973) summarized that television is a man's world for the mature market person. Moreover, in a study on seven large mass circulation magazines, Gantz et al. (1980) found that there were more mature market men than women even in the magazines that were typically targeted more toward women.

In conclusion, because advertisers stay tuned to the normative order and value shifts of our culture, they may anticipate and amplify these value changes in the portrayal of the mature market (Leiss et al., 1986). However,

advertisers are more likely to respond slowly to the reflection of broader changes of any group (Wernick, 1984) because they want to work with existing values and ideologies that are the most desirable to a broad spectrum of the population (Sissors, 1978).

Media Portrayal

Analyses on media portrayals of the mature market have been done on a range of media from advertising to children's books. The researcher will present the entire gamut of media to show the scope and proportion of the portrayals of the mature market as related to advertising.

Television Portrayal

Results of several studies indicated that the mature market were underrepresented in program content (Petersen, 1973; Signorelli & Gerbner, 1977; & Harris & Feinberg, 1977). In a study that monitored the relationship between television viewing and self-concept (Korzenny & Neuendorf, 1980), the researchers concluded that "the functions that TV serves for the aged relate negatively to self-concept and may reflect increased alienation from society" (p.71). Conversely, more positive portrayals of the mature market in television may improve positive self-image and result in a more productive integration into society (Korzenny & Neuendorf, 1980).

Some studies from the late 1970s and early 1980s provided evidence that media portrayals of the mature market in media are slightly improving. For example, Nussbaum et al. (1989) noted studies by Hess (1978) and Jamieson (1978) that indicated that positive portrayals of the mature market in television had increased and other researchers have reported similar trends (Bishop & Krause, 1984; Davis & Davis, 1985; & Elliot, 1984).

Magazine Advertising Portrayals

In a comprehensive study of magazine advertisements by Nussbaum et al. (1989), the researchers concluded from their analysis of advertising portrayals of the mature market that "stereotypical attitudes can and do impact the quality of life for the elderly and others, and the mass media may be a significant factor, in the creation and maintenance of such attitudes" (p. 63).

Kvasnicka, Beymer, and Perloff (1982) administered a study that explored whether the portrayal of the mature market in high circulation magazines was comparable to their depiction in specialized magazines. The researchers found that national magazine portrayals of the mature market reinforced inactivity and low self-images while specialized magazines may have supported more favorable self-images (Kvasnicka et al., 1982). Even with the increase in use of the mature market person, they are still proportionately underrepresented in magazine advertisements (Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1990).

Gantz et al. (1980) discovered that the mature market were poorly represented in popular magazine advertisements: Only 6% of all advertisements contained mature market persons. The researchers (Gantz et al., 1980) pointed out that in comparison with the size of the mature market people in the U.S. population, they were under-represented in magazine advertisements. For example, in all ads analyzed, there were a total of 17,838 people, of whom only 551 were mature market persons. With the exclusion of borderline cases, 1 in 30 people in magazine advertisements were mature market people (Gantz et al., 1980). In terms of the numerical composition of the group in the advertisements, advertisements with mature market persons

contained nearly twice as many non-mature market persons (Gantz et al., 1980).

In another part of the Gantz et al. (1980) study, fifteen product categories were developed to determine the types of products in which advertisers portrayed the mature market. Advertisements selling corporate image rather than consumer products were the most frequently used depictions of the mature market. The most frequent appearances in consumer products were in advertisements for liquor, travel, insurance, recreation, smoking, and food (Gantz et al, 1980). In terms of gender percentages, 74% of the mature market who appeared in advertisements were men (Gantz et al., 1980), and there was not a difference between men and women in terms of products in which they advertised.

In conclusion, Gantz et al. (1980) predicted that because of the scarcity of the mature market in magazine advertisements, the possibility existed that the mature market would not play a major role in the consumer society. Therefore, before the relationship of product consumption and semiotics is discussed, it is essential to review the process of advertising: Advertising is communication between the marketplace and individuals within society; advertising educates and informs the public in a persuasive manner about products, services, institutions, and ideas to effect changes in beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors among individuals (Sandage & Fryburger, 1989); and advertising is a catalyst that joins the informational needs and wants of individuals and the market (Carey, 1989) and stimulates cooperative activity between the market and consumer.

Semiotics and Product Consumption

Overview

In a study by Zaltman and Wallendorf (1979), it was found that consumption of goods may depend more on their social meaning than their functional utility, and therefore, symbolic qualities of products are often determinants of product evaluation and adoption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982).

Through advertising, there is an exchange between old goods and new goods. Consumers are constantly giving up old meanings and taking on new ones. In this respect, advertising is a conduit through which meaning is constantly being circulated in its movement from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods (Solomon, 1983). Ultimately, owners may use products to communicate role information to other people (Solomon, 1983).

Semiotics and Product Advertising

Advertising is an instrument for transferring meaning from the culturally constituted world to the product (Williamson, 1978). Within the frame of an advertisement, advertising works as a potential method of meaning transfer by bringing consumer goods and representations of the culturally constituted world together (Williamson, 1978). Forest (1989) stated that "advertising not only mirrors trends but influences consumer behavior" (p. 143), and, "advertising socializes consumers by educating them about who they are and what they can become" (p.143). Williamson (1978) asserted that:

For the transfer of meaning to be successful, the advertisement must be decoded by the viewer/reader. The viewer/reader is the final author in the process of transfer ... the viewer/reader is to this extent an essential participant in the process of meaning transfer ... the viewer/reader must complete the work of the director. (p. 40-70)

In another study, McCracken and Pollay (1981) argued that advertising constantly attempts to bestow a product with properties beyond its intrinsic features. An advertisement displays a select set of objects, persons, and activities with the product. When an audience acknowledges resemblances, this establishes a transfer between properties of meanings and the co-present entities (Rodeheaver & Stohs, 1991).

Object-Code

Dyer (1982) defined the code as "a set of rules or an interpretive device known to both transmitter and receiver, which assigns a certain meaning or content to a certain sign" (p. 131). Moreover, the object-code establishes a means by which a society both encourages and discourages change (McCracken, 1982): It serves both as an instrument of change and as an instrument of continuity.

A group can redefine itself through object-code manipulation of goods. It also helps social groups such as the mature market establish alternative ways of seeing themselves that are both outside of and contrary to existing cultural definitions. It also serves to help a society incorporate changes into the existing cultural framework and to diffuse their destabilizing potential (McCracken, 1982). In summary, the object-code serves as a dynamic, open set (McCracken, 1982) that can be rearranged to accommodate the creative product symbolism of emergent social groups.

Summary of Product Consumption

Products may be determinants of behavior. Since an abundance of products and services are rich in symbolic content and meaning, the nature of the consumers' interactions with these symbol systems may determine their attitudes toward products and toward themselves (McCracken, 1982).

Product Consumption by the Mature Market

Morgan and Levy (1993) forewarned that between 1990 and 2000, the number of 18-34 year olds will shrink by nine million people and lose \$40 billion in spending power while 12 million more Americans older than 50 will be spending an additional \$300 billion a year. The combined income of the mature market is more than \$800 billion (Stoeger, 1994), and the mature market now accounts for 40% of all consumer demands (Conaway, 1994).

The the wealth and spending power of the mature market is exemplified by the following list:

- mature market consumers are 25% of the population, yet they control 63% of the wealth.
- mature market persons own 77% of the country's financial assets.
- the mature market segment represents over \$800 billion in combined personal income.
- mature market persons hold over 50% of the nation's discretionary income (money remaining after necessities are paid) at \$130 billion.
- mature market households, headed by those 55 to 59, have the highest annual discretionary income: \$14,584 (Conaway, 1994).

Furthermore, households headed by 55+ adults spend 30% or more than the average household on a large variety of consumer goods such as beauty parlor services, flowers and plants, food purchases for home, gardening and lawn care services, household linens, newspapers and magazines, women's shoes and dresses, vitamins and medical supplies (Conaway, 1994).

The group of people 50-plus are purchasing 43% of all domestic cars; 30% of all food consumed at home; 25% of all alcoholic beverages; 25% of

all cosmetic and bath products; 41% of all toaster ovens and food processors; 37% of all slenderizing treatments and health spa memberships; and 31% of all automobile tires (Harris, 1988).

Conclusion

The mature market will be the center of consumer growth for the next 40 years because of the 76 million Baby-boomers who will be entering the market with immense spending potential. Consumers buy only those products with brand images consistent with the way they view themselves, and research indicated (Lunsford & Burnett, 1992) that the mature market is seldomly portrayed in a positive manner in advertisements. Lunsford and Burnett (1992) concluded that negative portrayals adversely affect attitudes toward companies and products, and as a result, this may have a negative effect on purchase behavior.

Activity and the Mature Market

Activity Studies

The Palmore (1968) and Atchley (1994) studies on activities of the mature market person became prevalent during the timespan of this study.

Palmore (1968) conducted the longitudinal study of aging at Duke University which confirmed the basic propositions offered by the activity theory. Data was obtained from mature market persons who were relatively healthy. Palmore's (1968) 10-year study determined that respondents showed consistently high levels of activity, and disengagement by the mature market person was not an inevitable result of aging. Furthermore, activity was strongly related to high morale and life satisfaction. Men showed almost no overall reduction in activities or life satisfaction; whereas, women showed a small reduction in both activities and life satisfaction. Decreased activities

due to illness were followed by increased activities so, overall, there was very little or no change. More activity equated with more happiness.

Palmore (1968) concluded that the amount of the mature market person's activity was consistent with his or her past lifestyle; and therefore, engagement as opposed to disengagement was the most typical activity pattern. The Duke longitudinal study (Palmore, 1968) confirmed or modified existing theories in the areas of socioeconomic status, retirement, social activities, social networks, and life satisfaction. The findings will be discussed in the following activity sections under economics, health, work, retirement, recreation, leisure, social, and political.

Another longitudinal study's findings (Palmore, Nowlin, and Wang, 1985) contradicted the gloomy assumption that older (75+) mature market person's activities decline in most ways. A 10-year follow-up of 297 mature market persons ages 72+ (men) and 75+ (women) measured social, economic, physical, mental, and activities of daily living. The findings indicated that there was little or no decline in social and economic functions and only moderate declines in mental, physical, and activities of daily living functions. Most importantly, the researchers concluded that demographic and socioeconomic characteristics were usually strong predictors of decline in function. It was also found that women had lower function ratings than men. And lastly, mental impairment was an especially strong predictor of social decline, but social decline did not predict mental impairment. The researchers asserted that the results indicted that decline in activity and functions among the 72+ age group is highly variable.

Chin-Sang and Allen (1991) examined leisure activities of mature market African-American women 64+ who had retired from the professions,

blue-collar work, service occupations, and domestic work. The researchers concluded that "the number of leisure activities in which an older black person engages is dependent on socioeconomic status and perceived state of health, but not on age or actual number of chronic conditions." (p. 30)

Fontana (1977) investigated the participant's feelings about growing older among a group of mature market persons at a senior citizen center. Fontana (1977) discovered that activity was associated with life satisfaction and high morale. The respondents emphasized that activity meant staying young and inactivity meant becoming old. Fontana (1977) concluded that activities provide meaning for the mature market, and therefore, activities are the remedy for the aging process.

Concepts about Activities

Definitions of activities are not mutually exclusive (Atchley, 1994). For example, there are elements of leisure in both work and free-time activities and elements of work in many leisure pursuits (Atchley, 1994). Activities can have many meanings for an individual (Atchley, 1994). In conclusion, social-class differences in activities are the result of differences in what people are taught to prefer, and part is due to financial capacity (Atchley, 1994).

Types of Activities

Economic. Partially because of the improvements in Social Security pensions in the 1970s, the proportion of the mature market living in poverty dropped from 24.5% in 1970 to 12.4% in 1991 (Atchley, 1994). The discretionary buying power per dollar of income for the mature market person averages more than that of buyers under 50 years old (Burnett, 1991). Between 1980 and 1988, average incomes for those over 65 increased by

20% while average incomes of those ages 15-64 increased by only 13.9% (Moon, 1990). In terms of direct income, the mature market is heterogeneous (Atchley, 1994).

Retirement and work. For a large majority of people, retirement produces few feelings of discontinuity in activities (Atchley, 1994). Kelly (1993) concluded that most people continue to do the same activities they did before retirement, especially in the early years of retirement. In a study by Atchley and Cottrell (1969), they found that social participation was not adversely affected by retirement. Parnes and Less (1983) discovered that there was no difference between the types of activities of retirees and non-retirees.

Retirement is defined as the separation of an individual from a work role, a role performed for pay. The term retirement is usually reserved for separation from those positions that bring monetary rewards (Atchley, 1994). Kart (1985) concluded from several comprehensive studies that there has been no support for the myths that retirement is detrimental to one's health. In fact, longitudinal studies have found that most retirees show a slight improvement in overall health after retirement, and there was not a difference in mortality rate between retirees and those remaining in the labor force (Cox, 1993).

Recreation and leisure. Atchley (1994) defined recreation as "activities such as sports, games, vacations, and hobbies that aim to renew mind and body by either relieving them of tension or delivering them from boredom. Recreation is primarily a reaction to some state of body or mind" (p. 177).

Similarly, Atchley (1994) defined leisure as "leisure activities are pursued as ends in themselves. They are unplanned and unrequired. Leisure is primarily action, directed generally toward self-development" (p.177).

Atchley (1994) combined leisure and recreation under the general label of leisure because "recreation and leisure aim primarily at relaxation, entertainment, and personal development. As such, they are institutions that are oriented around the needs of individuals, particularly the needs for tension management, enhancement of self-esteem, and identity" (p. 177).

A study by Moss and Lawton (1982) monitored how retired people spent their time during the weekday. The researchers divided activities into obligatory activities such as housework or personal care and discretionary activities such as exercise, hobbies, or watching television. Results of the study (Moss & Lawton, 1982) indicated that the respondents spent about 5.5 hours per day on obligatory activities and 10.5 hours on discretionary activities.

Social. Total activity tends to decline on the average for all age levels; however, there is a lot of variation within the mature segment (Palmore, 1981). Furthermore, certain types of activities do not decline, and there are substantial minorities who maintain or increase their social activities as they age (Palmore, 1981). Atchley (1994) asserted that time spent with friends decline from the teens through the fifties, but rises again after sixty. Although there are shifts in the type of persons in the social network (Palmore, 1981), the density (number of persons and frequency of interaction) tends to remain constant.

Political. Mature market persons over 65 have the highest voting rate of any age group (Palmore, 1981), and political interest has been shown to

increase with age. In general, the proportion of voting is the lowest at the age of 18; it increases to a plateau in the 50s and then gradually declines after the age of 75. Yet, people in their 80s are more likely to vote than people in their 20s (Palmore, 1981).

Volunteer. Fischer (1991) advised that the way in which volunteer work is defined determines the amount of participation. For example, family care such as baby-sitting, and caring for friends and neighbors could constitute volunteer work. Palmore (1981) concluded that when socioeconomic status was controlled, the pattern for volunteer work was generally stable with increasing levels of membership and participation after 45 and at least up to the ages of 75-80. A study by Gallup Associates (1982) found that the mature market group between 50 to 64 had the highest proportion of involvement in voluntary or charitable organizations.

Religion/Church. Church attendance is at a high level for people in their sixties, but becomes less regular with advancing age (Palmore, 1981). Atchley (1994) noted that as people age, they may continue to participate in religious or voluntary organizations, provided that the involvement begins in middle age (Continuity theory).

Summary of Activities

Atchley (1994) concluded that in order to maximize leisure opportunities, the two key requirements are having enough personal income, and being in close proximity to friends and relatives.

Conclusions and Statement of the Problem

It is imperative that advertisers accurately portray the activity levels of the mature market segment. Examination of advertising portrayals of the mature market is important because it provides insight into society's

perceptions of the fastest growing segment of our population. The literature supports the need to reevaluate the traditional portrayals of activity levels of mature market persons in magazine advertising because activity levels have been expanding and increasing as the mature market's population size and life expectancy have been increasing.

Mature market persons engage in several types of activities, and roles enacted during these activities are learned in various ways. Attitudes toward the mature market and the process of aging may be learned through advertising. Role portrayals of the mature market are continuously being reinforced through magazine advertising, and the mature market may use advertising portrayals of themselves for self-evaluation.

Semiotic theory is supported by labeling theory and the models of social breakdown and social reconstruction. These theories demonstrated how message recipients decode the meaning of the message in advertisements, and consequently, how role expectations and norms of behavior for activities of mature market persons could become established through advertising.

The literature acknowledges the powerful role advertising has in determining and reflecting society's conceptions, perceptions and attitudes of the mature market, and for this purpose, questions the portrayal of activity levels of the mature market in magazine advertisements. Because it is nearly five years before the first wave of Baby-boomers enter into the mature market segment of the population (55+), magazine advertisements must accurately advance a more realistic portrayal of activity levels by the mature market. The research suggested that although there has been a slight increase in some instances, both negatively and positively, in advertising portrayals of the

mature market over the last two decades, the portrayals of activity levels of the mature market in advertising may have been misleading.

There has not been a comparative time period study of the activity level portrayals of the mature market in magazine advertising. The significance of conducting a content analysis of the mature market in magazine advertising is addressed to determine if advertising portrayals of the activity levels of the mature market in national, nonspecialized magazine advertisements has increased over the last 15 years. Therefore, an inquiry into this issue is supported.

Hypothesis

By examining the portrayals of activity levels of the mature market in seven national, high circulation magazines, the following hypothesis will be tested:

The activity level portrayals of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines will not have significantly changed from 1980 to 1995.

CHAPTER III

Method

Terms and Definitions

The mature market consists of all adults over the age of 55 (Morgan & Levy, 1993; Conaway, 1994; and Harris, 1988), and the term, mature market person(s), will be the expression for references to this group.

The Selection of Research Approach

Content analysis, as a method of studying advertising messages, can largely overcome the weaknesses of semiology (Leiss et al., 1986), and assist semiologists in understanding the transfer of and interpretation of meanings by advertisers to individuals. Furthermore, Leiss et al. (1986) claimed that:

Issues of reliability, the size of the data base, and generalization from this sample to a larger universe are specifically taken into account in the content analysis design...Semiology can admittedly do a better job on the single ad in isolation, because it is explicitly concerned with the 'movement' of meaning within the text and between the text and outside world. Content analysis can do little more than to 'unpack' the surface of meaning of an ad in a rather obvious way; its strength stems from its ability to relate this information to the sample as a whole in a rigorous manner and to detect patterns of similarities and differences. (p. 169)

Berelson (1952) conceptualized the method of content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 15).

Consequently, a content analysis approach was implemented to establish a concrete, retrievable landmark for appraising changes that might have occurred in the portrayals of activity levels of the mature segment in magazine advertisements. The unit of analysis is all magazine advertisements from the time periods, 1980 and 1995.

Selection of the Time Period

The period of study, 1980-1995, was determined by the following: The year 1980, as the base, which was highlighted by the Gantz et al. (1980) landmark study of the role portrayal of the mature market in national, general magazines; the 1980s as the period of heightened awareness of the mature market's growth. The Gray Panther's have been representative of the increasing concern about changing the treatment and misconception of the mature market (Friedan, 1993). For example, the Gray Panthers established the National Media Task Force during the 1970s which continued to monitor age stereotyping throughout the 1980s. In addition, in 1986, Nussbaum and Robinson concluded their invaluable study of media portrayal of the mature market; and the early to mid 1990s, as the period where the large populous of Baby-boomers (born between the years 1946-1964) will be entering the mature market segment; and 1995, as the final year of the study.

The Selection of Magazines

Types of Magazines

Seven high circulation magazines were selected for study: *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, *Family Circle*, *Fortune*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Esquire*. The amalgamation of all magazines in this study represents a moderately broad, diversified spectrum of genres that are of large mass circulation. Therefore, to determine the portrayal of the mature segment in advertisements in large circulation magazines, all specialized magazines targeted to both ends of the demographic spectrums of age, gender, and income were excluded from the content analysis. For example, specialized magazines with age-specific activity related editorial and advertising content such as *Modern Maturity*, *Fifty Plus*, *Retirement Life*, and *Retirement Living*

were not analyzed because ads specifically targeted to the mature market segment would not be indicative of ads targeted to the general population.

Since the major percentage of readership for all seven magazines is within the age category of 25-54, other magazines that are targeted to extreme ends of the age continuum have been eliminated from this study. The inclusion of *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Family Circle* in this study, on one extreme, and the inclusion of *Fortune* and *Esquire* in this study, on the other extreme, contributed to an extension of the mean age and the percentage of gender perimeters; and as a consequence, this provided for a more balanced and fruitful resource of units of analyses.

Sources for Magazine Selections

Selection of the seven national, high circulation, commercial magazines was determined from data obtained from *Simmons* (1993; 1996, Spring), *SRDS* (1995), and *Magazines for Libraries* (1995). The readership percentages for the 55-plus age category range from a combined total of 15.8% (*People*) to 30.3% (*Family Circle*) compared to the readership percentages for the 18-24 age market segment which range from 7.2% (*Family Circle*) to 16.9% (*People*).

In summary, the magazines selected represent an overall balance of demographic circulation and readership percentages by gender, age, and income with the readers' median age of 40, and the individual and household incomes ranging from \$18,409 to \$63,283, respectively (see Appendix A for magazine readership demographics).

Demographic Breakdown of Magazines

All demographic data was obtained from the Spring edition of *Simmons* (1996), and data obtained for circulation and readership was

confirmed in November, 1996 by direct responses from the seven magazines' advertising agencies, for example, Time Incorporated Magazines.

Newsweek's circulation was 3,228,231, with a readership of 20,720,000, a median age of readers at 41.2 and the percentage of readers by gender was 55% (men) and 45% (women). *Time* represented a circulation of 4,000,000, a readership of 18,600,000, a median age of readers at 41.9, and the percentage of readers by gender was 52% (men) and 48% (women).

People maintained a circulation of 3,300,000, a readership of 33,600,000, a median age of readers at 38.3, and the percentage of readers by gender was 36% (men) and 64% (women).

Family Circle's circulation was 5,000,000, readership was 25,000,000, a median age of readers at 45.3, and the percentage of readers by gender was 11% (men) and 89% (women). *Fortune* represented a circulation of 804,754, a readership of 3,489,000, a median age of readers at 41.3, and the percentage of readers by gender was 66% (men) and 34% (women). *Better Homes and Gardens'* circulation was 7,616,270, readership was 34,790,000, a median age of readers at 44.2, and the percentage of readers by gender was 23% (men) and 77% (women). *Esquire* maintained a circulation of 650,000, a readership of 2,900,000, a median age of readers at 27.9, and the percentage of readers by gender was 60 (men) and 40 (women).

Sampling Methods

The seven magazines selected for this study have been categorized into three groups which were determined by the frequency of the issue: weekly, biweekly, and monthly.

Weekly magazines. *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *People* are the weekly magazines in this study. In order for the magazines' time frames to be

consistent with the other monthly and biweekly magazines, the monthly starting point was identical. Next, one weekly issue within each month for each bimonthly period (occurring every two months) was randomly selected for a total of six issues per magazine for each yearly time period. For example, the first weekly issue from the starting month of February was randomly selected from among the five maximum number of weeks for each month. This method continued for all two month periods through December for 1980 and 1995. In this case, if the fifth week had been selected in months with four weeks, an alternate week, for example, the second week, would have been provided for every sample month. Consequently, each weekly issue in every bimonthly period had an equal chance of being selected. This assured random sampling.

Biweekly magazines. The biweekly issues in this study are *Family Circle* and *Fortune* magazines. The beginning point of analysis paralleled that of the monthly issues for each yearly time period. Therefore, one biweekly issue within each bimonthly period (occurring every two months) was randomly selected for a total of six issues for each yearly time period. For example, one biweekly issue (occurring every two weeks) from the starting point of February was randomly selected among the four maximum number of issues during this two month period. Biweekly issues from the second half of each selected month were chosen, and this method continued for all two month periods through December for 1980 and 1995. As a result, every biweekly issue in every bimonthly period had an equal chance of being selected.

Monthly magazines. Monthly issues of *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Esquire* have been analyzed. Application of the systematic random sample

method determined the starting point of the year, and then, every other month (skip-interval) was examined throughout the one year period for a total of six issues per magazine per year. Both time periods had the same starting point. For example, February was coded as the first issue of the year; the second issue was April; and the third issue was June. The pattern continued through December for each time period. This will assure systematic random samples.

The researcher included all 12 months for random sampling because, for the purpose of this study, it was important to evaluate the overall role portrayals of the mature market in advertisements throughout the entire year. This included both the summer and winter holiday seasons, whereby, the frequency of ads and the types of role portrayals fluctuated dramatically.

Coding Levels and Categories

The structural underpinning and framework for the development of the activity levels and product/service categories was an amalgamation of notable studies originated by Gantz et al. (1980), Kline and Leiss (1978), Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976), and Greco (1988).

Activity Levels

Background. The coding protocol that was sought to identify the activity levels of the mature market was developed from the study of activities in magazine advertisements by Kline and Leiss (1978).

Developments and discoveries. However, to find the activity level of the mature market persons as opposed to only their sole activity, the list of activities in the Kline and Leiss (1978) study required reordering by the researcher. Six participants were subsequently asked to combine the activity types into five randomly ordered groups of most similar activities.

Afterwards, the participants were asked to arrange the groups of activities in order from the least active level of activity to the most active level of activity. As a result, the activity level variable which consisted of 22 activity types was collapsed into five activity levels ranging from the least active activities to the most active activities.

Additionally, for the purpose of this study, the researcher changed the name and definition of the activity type, Work--glamorous, to Work--professional before the pretesting began. It is important to note that an activity may consist of a combination of physical, mental, and intellectual energy.

After the coder training sessions and the pretesting concluded, it became apparent that some changes to activity types and definitions were necessary before the actual coding began. The activity type, Educational, was created for the medium activity level. In addition, within the medium activity level, the Sports spectating activity type was changed to Sports and entertainment spectating, and Social--friends was changed to Social--friends/family. The Work--professional definition in the high activity level was redefined to include professional musicians and athletes.

Levels of activity. The continuous flow of activity levels necessitated an activity level range of 1-5, and subsequently, coding scores and ranges within each level were formulated to enhance the descriptive analysis for each level of activity (see Table 1 on page 48).

Table 1

Activity Level Coding, Scoring, and Ranges for all Mature Market Ads

Activity Term	Activity Level	Coding Score	Activity Level Range
Very Low	1	1	> 1.4
Low	2	2	1.5 - 2.4
Medium	3	3	2.5 - 3.4
High	4	4	3.5 - 4.4
Very High	5	5	< 4.5

Moreover, definitions of specific activity level types that occur within each activity level have been provided for coding and interpretational clarity (see Table 2 on pages 48-51).

Table 2

Descriptions and Definitions of Activity Levels and Activity Types

Activity Levels and Types	Definitions
Level One: Very Low Activity	
Disengagement	Isolation and inactivity.
Sleeping	Indoor or outdoor, day or night.
Rest and relaxation	Separation of work role.

(table continues)

Table 2 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Activity Levels and Activity Types

Activity Levels and Types	Definitions
<u>Level Two: Low Activity</u>	
Religion	Attendance of church services, prayer and meditation. Volunteer at religious organizations and events.
Personal maintenance	Make-up, showering, brushing teeth, hair parlor or barber.
<u>Level Three: Medium Activity</u>	
Educational	Attendance at schools and universities, participation in adult education, arts and crafts classes.
Sports and entertainment spectating	Watching at sports arenas, concerts, and parades. Active participation as a fan or audience member.
Social--romance	Nonverbal close positioning, kissing, hugging, dining, dancing, ambiance, parties, and entertainment.
Social--family/friends	One or more persons engaged in talking, dining, and parties at all locations such as parks, organizations, and volunteer events.

(table continues)

Table 2 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Activity Levels and Activity Types

Activity Levels and Types	Definitions
<u>Level Three: Medium Activity (cont.)</u>	
Traveling	Automobiles, airplanes, cruises, and tours.
Purchasing and shopping	Malls, grocery stores, car lots, furniture and clothing stores.
<u>Level Four: High Activity</u>	
Childcare--volunteer work	Baby-sitting and guardian care.
Housework--indoor	Cooking, vacuuming, cleaning, and repairing.
Housework--outdoor	Gardening, painting, cleaning, and car washing.
Work--ordinary	Blue collar, desk clerk, mail person, farmer, and driver.
Work--professional	White collar, leadership, business, and teaching. Entertainers, athletes, and musicians. Also, professionals such as lawyers and doctors.
<u>Level Five: Very High Activity</u>	
Recreational and leisure	All variables listed below pertaining to competitive and regular sports, games,

(table continues)

Table 2 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Activity Levels and Activity Types

Activity Levels and Types	Definitions
Level Five: Very High Activity (cont.)	
Recreational and leisure (cont.)	and tension management.
Walking	Exercise or relaxation.
Golf	All levels of golf for competition or relaxation.
Biking	All levels of biking for competition or relaxation.
Sports	All levels of sports for competition or relaxation.
Other	Any combination of highly physical, mental, and emotional activities not previously listed.

Product/Service Categories

Background. To display the frequency and percentage of advertisements containing those who are representative of the mature market by product/service category and specific product/service type, the author combined the product/service category definitions from the Gantz et al. (1980) study of the mature market, the Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) study on women, and the Greco (1988) study.

Developments and discoveries. Several product/service category descriptions were created by the researcher. Ultimately, 20 product/service categories were developed, tested, and redefined in the coder training sessions. For coding purposes, the 20 product/service categories were rearranged and grouped into six categories based on similar product/service types.

Results from the coder training sessions and the pretesting indicated that several areas of the product/service categories, types, and definitions required adjustments if the coding results were to be reliable. For example, the two product/service category types of Electronic and office equipment and Education were included, and names of other product/service category types were expanded such as Clothing to Clothing and accessories, and Pet foods to Pet foods and products.

Definitions for both product category types of Household goods and appliances and Outdoor maintenance and repair items were expanded to include paints and paint supplies. Advertisements for motorcycles and car rentals were included in the definition of the Autos and automotive products. Corporate image was refined to include computer and communication system companies. Vitamins and prescription drugs were added to the Drugs and health care goods product/service type. The inclusion of Pet products to the Pet foods product/service types expanded the definition to include shampoos, leashes, and veterinarians. The Travel product/service type was redefined to include hotels, motels, and resorts. New technologies necessitated an upgrade in the Media attractions definition to include products/services such as compact discs, compact disc games, and video games. The final addition was

the inclusion of products such as candies, gums, and breath mints to the product/service category of Other.

In conjunction with determining the activity level portrayal of the mature market person(s) in advertisements, the product/service advertisement designation was constructed to convey not only the overall amount of activity levels related to individual product/service categories, but also, it was developed to indicate the patterns of activity levels and activity types prevalent in general product/service categories and product/service types within advertisements. As a result, advertising could either be maintained or developed for the most effective activity level portrayals of the mature market for various products/services.

For example, the research data for the year 1980 may have indicated low activity level portrayals of the mature market in advertisements (level two) in the Recreation and sporting goods product/service category type; whereas, the research data for the year 1995 may have indicated medium activity level portrayals of the mature market in advertisements (level 3) in the same product/service category type of Recreation and sporting goods.

Categories. Definitions of the product/service categories and the specific product/service types have been ordered by similarities within an coding range of one to six (see Table 3 on pages 54-58).

Table 3

Descriptions and Definitions of Product/Service Categories and Types

Product Categories/Services	Definitions
<u>Category One: Household, Autos, and Communications</u>	
Household goods and appliances	Floor wax, laundry detergents, cookware, window cleaners, soaps, and all indoor cleaning supplies. Appliances such as washers, dryers, and vacuums. Also, paints and paint supplies.
Outdoor maintenance and repair items	Lawnmowers, fertilizers, replacements, garden tools and supplies, paints and paint supplies are a few examples.
Autos and automotive products	Automobiles include cars and all vehicles of transportation such as trucks, recreation vehicles, and motorcycles that are owned, for sale or rent. Automotive products are defined as tires, gas, oil, or auto cleaners. Any item that is concerned with the care and maintenance of an automobile or vehicle of transportation.
Electronic and office equipment	All audio/visual, stereo, computers, electronic typewriters, desks, and lamps.

(table continues)

Table 3 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Product/Service Categories and Types

Product Categories/Services	Definitions
<u>Category One: Household, Autos, and Communications (cont.)</u>	
Electronic and office equipment (cont.)	Any advertisement that emphasizes the product instead of the corporate image.
<u>Category Two: Alcohol and Tobacco</u>	
Liquor	This category includes wine, beer, and hard liquor.
Smoking	All brands of cigarettes and pipes, tobacco, cigar and chewing tobacco.
<u>Category Three: Institutions and Monetary Affiliations</u>	
Corporate Image	Computer and communication systems companies such as Apple Computer, AT & T, and Pacific Bell. Also, advertisements for corporations such as Southwest Airlines are examples of business advertising that promote image rather than specific products to the

(table continues)

Table 3 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Product/Service Categories and Types

Product Categories/Services	Definitions
<u>Category Three: Institutions and Monetary Affiliations (cont.)</u>	
Corporate Image (cont.)	general population.
Securities and credit	Travel checks, savings and loans, banks, credit cards, and investments.
Insurance	State Farm, Prudential, Farmers Insurance are a few examples of insurance companies.
Education	Universities, colleges, training institutions, and book publishers.
<u>Category Four: Health, Care, and Maintenance</u>	
Drugs and health care goods	Over the counter and prescription drugs such as cold remedies, medications, and pain relievers. Health care goods are personal products such as deodorants, soaps, shampoos, or toothpastes. This category includes antacids, vitamins, and health accessories such as foot, back, and body maintenance products.

(table continues)

Table 3 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Product/Service Categories and Types

Product Categories/Services	Definitions
<u>Category Four: Health, Care, and Maintenance (cont.)</u>	
Beauty aids and cosmetics	Hair products, colognes, perfumes, make-up, blowdryers, hair curlers, hair dyes, and shavers are all examples of beauty aids.
Clothing and accessories	Men's, women's, or children's clothing which includes suits, jackets, and shoes.
Infant care	Any product associated with infants such as diapers, baby foods, or baby powders.
Pet foods and products	Dog and cat foods such as Alpo, Purina and Wagon Train. Products such as soaps and shampoos, leashes, dishes, beds, and training equipment.
<u>Category Five: Sports, Travel, and Media</u>	
Recreation and sporting goods	Products related to physical activity such as golf, tennis, fishing, and walking.

(table continues)

Table 3 (cont.)

Descriptions and Definitions of Product/Service Categories and Types

Product Categories/Services	Definitions
<u>Category Five: Sports,</u>	
<u>Travel, and Media (cont.)</u>	
Travel	Airlines, cruises, and bus lines promoting travel through agencies or companies. Also, resorts, hotels, motels, and promotions for cities. Corporate image advertisements for airlines are excluded from this category.
Media attractions	Cable television and network advertisements. Promotions for tapes, compact disk games and music, videos, movies, concerts, books, and magazines.
<u>Category Six: Food, Beverage, and Other</u>	
Food and non-alcohol beverages	Products such as produce, meats, juices, carbonated drinks and alcohol-free wine coolers and beer.
Other	Anything not previously listed such as candies, chewing gums, and breath mints.

Content Analysis Procedure

Fundamental Questions of the Study

When analyzing the seven national, commercial magazines, four questions were addressed in order of utility for this study: How are the mature segments' activity levels being portrayed in 1980 compared to 1995? What types of product/service advertisements and specific types of activities are the mature market persons portrayed? What are the relationships between the activity level portrayals of mature market persons and the types of product/service advertisements? With what frequency and numerical composition do mature market persons appear in advertisements in terms of gender and age?

Coder Recognition of Mature Market Persons

The primary coding task was to distinguish the mature market from everyone else portrayed in the advertisements. The criteria for defining the portrayal of mature market persons were developed from the Gantz et al. (1980) study as follows: a direct mention of age (at least 65), extensive gray hair, extensive wrinkling of the skin around the face and/or hands, and usual differences in appearance that distinguish the differences between various levels of the aging process, use of ambulatory aids in addition to the previously mentioned characteristics, reference to as a grandmother or grandfather, and reference to being retired.

Only specific mention of age was a sufficient condition for classifying a person into the mature segment. All other criteria was evaluated in reference to one another. Thus, for example, a woman labeled grandmother who appeared to be about 40 or a gray-haired man actively pursuing his young children was not coded as a mature market person. However, each

(additional) criterion identified increased the probability of being considered a person of age 55+. Borderline cases were classified as within the age range of 55. thus, the number of people coded as the mature segment reflected a liberal bias (Gantz et al., 1980).

Coding Procedure

Activity Level

This study focused on the relationship between semiotic theory and the average activity level portrayal of all mature market persons in all advertisements from the sample. The purpose of this research was not to solely account for the mere presence of mature market people in advertisements, but instead, the goal of this research was to analyze differences in activity levels of the mature market. Therefore, when the coding was completed, the researcher obtained an average activity level score for each advertisement. As a consequence, the results produced an average activity level composite for all members of the mature market.

In advertisements where there was only one mature market person depicted in more than one activity level, the coders averaged the two activity level scores to obtain the final activity level score. For example, in an advertisement where a mature market person is pictured bicycle riding with a companion who is not a mature market person, the mature market person may have been scored for activity levels of both Social--friends (coding score of 3.0) and Biking (coding score of 5.0) for an overall activity level score of 4.0.

This study is concerned with the semiotic impression of the combined activity of all mature market persons in each advertisement. Therefore, when two or mature market persons were portrayed in an advertisement, the activity level scores of each mature market person were averaged together to

produce one average activity level for the advertisement. For example, if one mature market person were portrayed as one who was Sleeping (coding score of 1.0) and the other mature market person's activity in the advertisement were portrayed as the Personal Maintenance category (coding score of 2.0), then the two coding scores would be averaged for a total activity level score of 1.5.

If a mature market person within the group in the advertisement were depicted as a being involved in two activity levels, and the remaining mature market persons were depicted as members who were each involved in only one activity level, then first, the coders were instructed to average the activity level scores of the mature market person involved in two activity levels. Second, the coders were then trained to average the activity level scores of the group of mature market people in the advertisement. The results yielded only one average activity level score for each advertisement.

Likewise, if one mature market person were pictured several times within one advertisement and each picture portrayed the mature market person performing different activities, then the coders were instructed to average all activities into one final activity level score.

In advertisements that contained large groups of people, only people who were discernible were considered for coding purposes. For example, some advertisements displayed crowds of people from either a long distance or in a silhouette composition. Other advertisements pictured people as large and focused in the forefront, yet small and blurred in the background.

Product/Service Categories

In product/service advertisements where only one mature market person was portrayed, the mature market person was coded for only one

product category. Moreover, in product advertisements where there were two or more mature market persons, first, the product category advertisement was discerned from any other category type, and then each mature market person was coded individually. For example, in a Clothing category advertisement (coding score of 4.0) where there were two mature market members, the coders scored a 4.0 for each mature market person which produced an overall product category score of 4.0.

Duplication of Advertisements

Coders were instructed to code duplications of ads appearing more than once in the same year because this study has not been concerned merely with the number of advertisements with mature market persons, but most importantly, this study was based on a semiological approach for determining the average activity level portrayals of mature market persons in magazine advertisements.

Reach and frequency. The goal of most advertisers is to reach as many members of their target market as economically possible. This form of audience accumulation has been named reach, and its companion, frequency, may be defined as a statistical indicator for advertisers regarding the average number of times the audience members have been exposed to issues of different magazines (Sissors & Surmanek, 1982).

Advertisement placement and media planning. The advertiser must strive to accomplish a complimentary relationship between reach and frequency without entering the point of diminishing returns while simultaneously achieving maximum cost efficient market saturation. In other words, implementing a media plan to place only one advertisement in one issue for one year would most likely be an inappropriate media strategy.

Conversely, one advertisement strategically placed in several issues of several magazines to a general population would most likely reach the most people in the most common, practical, and effective way when an advertiser is pursuing maximum reach and frequency for a specific product.

Coder Instructions. Conclusively, since this study is about semiology theory as it pertains to the activity level portrayals of all mature market persons in general, national magazines, it was imperative to instruct the coders to code duplications of all ads appearing more than once in the same year. As a result, the total semiological impressions of activity levels of mature market persons was coded and justified by reach and frequency principles.

Size and Content of Advertisements

Only advertisements one-half page or larger with pictures of people, excluding cartoons, were selected for the unit of analysis. Coders were instructed to not evaluate copy (print) in advertisements unless it assists in identifying the relationship between the types of product categories and the portrayals of mature market persons. For example, copy with direct reference to age.

Coder and Intercoder Reliability

To ensure the accuracy of the researcher's construction of activity levels, types of activities within each level, product/service categories, specific types of product/services, specifications, and definitions, it was necessary for the researcher to conduct a training session, conduct a pilot test, and then conduct the actual coding. Two coders performed the coding function for the training session and the pilot study. When the coding of the pilot test was concluded, the Scott's Pi formula served as the instrument for

proving the statistical accuracy and intercoder reliability for the coding results of all data in this study (see Appendix B for sample coding sheet).

Coder training sessions. To assure that methodological problems were eliminated before the data was collected, training sessions were conducted that assisted in accurate identification of activity levels and correct usage of coding instruments. In the training session, the coders were asked to become familiar with the research design, definitions such as activity levels, activity types, product/service categories, and types of product/service categories. Additional background included a discussion of the hypothesis and the interpretational rules for the advertisements. The differences in responses were discussed during the coding of each advertisement. Lastly, to determine elements of inclusion or exclusion, the responses were compared item-by-item, level-by-level, and category-by-category.

Training for recognition of mature market people. In addition to training the coders how to recognize, interpret, and score the activity levels and product/service categories, the coders were trained to accurately recognize the mature market persons in magazine advertisements. For example, a sample of 20 advertisements that portray adult people was randomly selected from issues from the seven magazines selected for this study and administered to the two coders for evaluation. The coders reviewed the ads and selected the mature market persons versus the non-mature market persons.

Consequently, the two coders had 98% agreement for recognition of mature market persons in advertisements from four magazines (48 of 49 mature market people). The results determined that coder reliability was acceptable. Most importantly, coder training of mature market recognition

established the level of coder agreement for the selection of mature market persons in advertisements where people appeared to be borderline (+/- 55).

Administration of the pilot test. The pilot test was conducted with the two coders individually coding an identical, randomly selected subsample of 13% (10%-25% sample recommended) of the content universe under consideration. For example, 13 % of the issues from the magazines, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, *Family Circle*, *Fortune*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Esquire*, for the two time periods 1980 and 1995 was coded. Thereafter, the Scott's Pi formula was calculated for the purpose of testing intercoder reliability of the pilot test. Scott's Pi accounted for the occurrence of some coder agreement strictly because of chance, and it also corrected for the probable frequency of use and the number of categories used in the study (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994).

Results of the pilot test and Scott's Pi formula. In summary, there was consistency in the levels of agreement among two independent coders who coded the same content using the same coding instrument (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). Intercoder reliability should reach at least 80% agreement for a study of this nature. Results of the Scott's Pi test proved an intercoder reliability of 93%. As a result, one coder for coding the population in this study was justified.

The pilot test was administered without the assistance of the researcher followed by a question-answer period which enabled the researcher to concisely and clearly define the various activity levels, activity types, product/service categories, and product/service types (see Appendixes C and D for demonstrations of scoring sheets).

Extrapolation of the sample size to the population. Additionally, the quantity of data collected for all categories indicated that the sample size was large enough to represent the general population. If the sample size had rendered insufficient data, the researcher would have determined two courses of action: one, to increase the sample size to nine-twelve issues per magazine per year or, two, to delete coding categories that yielded deficient data.

Statistical Analysis

An independent *t* test was used to analyze the differences of activity levels between the independent variables, 1980 and 1995. The *t* test determined whether the difference between the sample means qualified as a common or rare outcome under the null hypothesis since the two samples were independent. Ultimately, application of the independent *t* test established statistical significance of difference for the dependent activity level variables for 1980 and 1995.

Additional Observations

Product/Service Categories

Relationships between activity levels and product/service categories were observed by percentages.

Demographics

The data results for frequency of portrayals of mature market persons in magazine advertising was examined by percentage comparisons.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Background of the Study

This study examined the activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements for 1980 and 1995 in seven national, high circulation magazines: *Newsweek*, *Time*, *People*, *Family Circle*, *Fortune*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Esquire*.

The data results from the two time periods was obtained from a systematic random sample size of 84 magazines in which 609 mature market advertisements of one-half page or larger were coded for a total of 1,253 mature market people (see Table 4 and Table 5 on page 68).

The seven magazines in this study represent a diverse, equally distributed, demographic readership. For example, all magazines have been grouped into sets that each have similar readership (i.e., men or women) with similarly equal percentages of advertisements (21% - 33%) for each time period, except *Fortune*, 1995. Therefore, the data results for activity levels, product/service categories, and percentages of the mature market by gender and frequencies is unbiased because demographic readership is evenly distributed for all magazines in 1980 and 1995 (see Table 6 on page 69).

Null Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis states that the activity level portrayals of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines will not have significantly changed from 1980 to 1995.

After assumptions for a *t* test were met, an independent *t* test was used to determine if there was any statistically significant difference in the average activity level of the mature market over the fifteen year period.

Table 4

Distribution of Magazine Ads Portraying the Mature Market (MM) for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

<u>Distribution of MM Ads by Year</u>		
Year	No. of Ads	% of Total
1980	335	55%
1995	274	45%
1980/1995	609	100%

Table 5

Distribution of the Portrayal of the Mature Market (MM) in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

<u>Distribution of MM in Ads by Year</u>		
Year	People in Ads	MM in Ads
1980	3,255	755
1995	2,983	498
1980/1995	6,238	1,253

Table 6

*Frequencies and Percentages of Mature Market Magazine Ads
Grouped by Majority of Gender Readership by Magazine
for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995*

Magazine by Majority of Gender	Year					
	1980		1995		1980 & 1995	
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%
<u>Women</u>						
BH & G	56	17%	40	15%	96	16%
Family Circle	40	12%	32	12%	72	12%
<u>Men</u>						
Fortune	62	19%	81	29%	143	23%
Esquire	31	9%	27	10%	58	9%
<u>Mixed</u>						
Newsweek	52	15%	31	11%	83	14%
Time	50	15%	28	10%	78	13%
People	44	13%	35	13%	79	13%
Total	335	100%	274	100%	609	100%

Note: BH & G is Better Homes and Gardens.

The results indicated that there was a *statistically significant difference* in the average activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements from 1980 and 1995. In other words, the null hypothesis was rejected at a .05 level of significance (see Table 7 on page 70).

Table 7

Comparison of Statistical Scores for the Activity Levels of the Mature Market in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Year	Statistical Scores						
	No. of Ads	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tail)
1980/1995	609	3.17	1.01	.0575	-2.58	607	0.010
1980	335	3.07	0.99				
1995	274	3.28	1.02				

However, upon further examination, this difference was determined not to be of any *practical significance*. The researcher scored the activity levels on a scale of one to five, and the average mean activity level score was 3.17 for 1980/1995. The difference between the mean activity level score of 3.07 in 1980 and the mean activity level score of 3.28 in 1995 represented a change of only 4% (.21) in activity level portrayals of the mature market over 15 years (see Table 8 on page 71).

Table 8 illustrated how the differences in mean scores, standard deviation scores, and distribution of advertisements of the mature market had limited variation from 1980 to 1995.

Table 8

Differences Among Frequency of Ads, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations in Activity Level Portrayal of the Mature Market for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Year	Activity Level Scores		
	Number of ads	Mean	Standard Deviation
1980	335	3.07	0.99
1995	274	3.28	1.02
1980/1995	609	3.17	1.01

Moreover, the mean score of activity level for the mature market by magazine and year consistently exhibited only minuscule changes. For example, the largest difference for the 1980 mean scores was .35 which represented a 7% change in activity level within a 1-5 activity level scoring range. The 7% change converts to approximately 25% of one activity level scoring point, for example, a difference from 2.0 to 2.25 in activity level. In 1995, the largest difference in mean scores was a .63 which represented a 12% change in activity level within a 1-5 activity level scoring range. The 12% change converts to approximately 60% of one activity level scoring

point, for example, an activity level difference from 2.0 to 2.6 (see Table 9 on page 72).

It was concluded that the practical significance that was determined from the relatively minor differences in the mean scores of activity levels of the mature market for 1980 and 1995 outweighed the statistically significant difference of .05 that was used to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 9

Mean Activity Level Scores and Standard Deviations for the Portrayal of the Mature Market in Magazine Ads for 1980 and 1995

Magazine	Year			
	1980		1995	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Newsweek</i>	2.93	1.09	3.31	0.93
<i>Time</i>	3.06	1.19	2.89	1.07
<i>People</i>	2.87	1.05	3.16	1.00
<i>Family Circle</i>	3.18	0.87	3.13	0.98
<i>Fortune</i>	3.16	0.89	3.52	1.09
<i>BH & G</i>	3.14	0.91	3.45	0.87
<i>Esquire</i>	3.22	0.89	3.06	0.93

Note: Maximum difference in mean scores is .35 and .63 for 1980 and 1995, respectively.

Both ends of the activity level range spectrum showed dramatic shifts in the number of advertisements portraying the activity level of the mature

market, and the middle range activity levels (medium and high, respectively) remained stable. For example, the lower end activity levels of very low and low proportionately decreased in the number of total advertisements portraying the mature market for each time period from 1980 to 1995 by 22% and 42%, respectively. However, one the other end of the activity level continuum, the activity level of very high increased by 45% in 1995 (see Table 10 on page 73).

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Magazine Ads for Five Levels of Activity Portrayals of the Mature Market for 1980 and 1995

Activity Levels	Year			
	1980		1995	
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%
Very low	29	9%	18	7%
Low	24	7%	11	4%
Medium	143	43%	112	41%
High	118	35%	102	37%
Very High	21	6%	31	11%
Total	335	100%	274	100%

Note: N = 609 ads

The shaded areas in Table 11 (see pages 75-76) signify the specific activity level types that indicated the most prevalent number of changes in ad count from 1980 to 1995. Activities such as Rest and relaxation, Personal maintenance, Social--romance, and Social--family/friends exhibited substantial decreases in the frequency and percentages of mature market advertisements (-68%, -59%, -50%, and -39%, respectively). Conversely, educational advertisements were used for the first time in mature market advertisements (+100%), and overall, there was a slight upward shift in frequency and percentages in the very high activity level activities. Interestingly, advertisements depicting the mature market as disengaged and as ordinary and professional workers all remained relatively constant for both time periods (see Table 11 on pages 75-76).

Table 11

*Comparison of Changes in Magazine Ad Portrayal of
the Activity Level Type of the Mature Market for 1980 and 1995*

Activity Level Types	Year				
	1980		1995		1980/1995
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	% Change
Very low activity					
Disengagement	69	20.6%	67	24.5%	-3%
Sleeping	2	0.6%	3	1.1%	34%
Rest and relaxation	41	12.2%	13	4.7%	-68%
Low activity					
Religion	1	0.3%			-100%
Personal maintenance	17	5.1%	7	2.5%	-59%
Medium activity					
Educational			4	1.5%	100%
Sports and entertainment spectating	1	0.3%	3	1.1%	67%
Social—romance	14	4.2%	7	2.6%	-50%
Social—family/friends	61	18.2%	37	13.5%	-39%
Traveling	12	3.6%	10	3.6%	-17%
Purchasing and shopping	2	0.6%	6	2.2%	67%

(table continues)

Table 11 (cont.)

*Comparison of Changes in Magazine Ad Portrayal of
the Activity Level Type of the Mature Market for 1980 and 1995*

Activity Level Types	Year				
	1980		1995		1980/1995
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	% Change
High activity					
Childcare--volunteer work			2	0.7%	100%
Housework--indoor	3	0.9%	4	1.5%	25%
Housework--outdoor	6	1.8%	4	1.5%	-34%
Work--ordinary	36	10.7%	30	11.0%	-17%
Work--professional	51	15.2%	50	18.2%	-2%
Very high activity					
Recreational and leisure	2	0.6%	2	0.7%	
Walking	3	0.9%	5	1.8%	40%
Golf			4	1.5%	100%
Biking	2	0.6%	2	0.7%	
Sports			1	0.4%	100%
Other	12	3.6%	13	4.7%	8%
Total	335	100%	274	100%	

Note: N = 609 ads

Additional Observations

Product/Service Categories and Types

From 1980 to 1995, the most dramatic decreases in the number of advertisements involving the mature market occurred in product/service categories one (Household, Autos, and Communications) and two (Alcohol and Tobacco) (39% and 82%, respectively), whereas, product/service categories four (Health, Care, and Maintenance) and five (Sports, Travel, and Media) demonstrated increases in advertisements portraying the mature market by 52% and 38%, respectively. The frequency of advertisements for product/service categories three (Institutional and Monetary Affiliations) and six (Food, Beverage, and Others) remained about equal over the fifteen year period (see Table 12 on page 78).

An important finding from Table 13 (see pages 79-81) is that it displays how examination of advertisements in specific product/service types located within a product/service category may illuminate potentially indiscernible information about changes in the frequencies of the mature market in various product/service type advertisements.

The Institutional and Monetary Affiliations category exemplifies how the frequency of specific product/service type ads within a product/service category may become bipolar opposites over a fifteen year period, yet a general examination on the category level may confirm stability within the frequency of ads. For example, product/service types within the Institutional and Monetary Affiliations category such as Corporate image and Insurance advertisements confirm decreases of -48% and -40%, respectively; conversely, Education and Securities and credit advertisements exhibit increases of 93% and 71%, respectively. Yet, changes from 1980 to 1995 in

frequency of advertisements in the Monetary and Institutional Affiliations category represents only a 6% increase (see Table 13 on page 79-81).

Table 12

*Frequencies and Percentages of Product/Service Categories
in Mature Market Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995*

Product/Service Category	Year					
	1980		1995		1980/1995	
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%
Household, Autos, and Comms.	61	18%	30	11%	91	15%
Alcohol/Tobacco	56	17%	9	3%	65	11%
Institutional and Monetary Affltn's	106	32%	99	36%	205	34%
Health, Care, and Maintenance	34	10%	56	21%	90	15%
Sports, Travel, and Media	44	13%	57	21%	101	16%
Food, Beverage, and Other	34	10%	23	8%	57	9%
Totals	335	100%	274	100%	609	100%

The total number of ads with the mature market in product/service category types decreased (with amount of ads for 1980 and 1995 in parentheses) in Household goods and appliances (14/4), Auto and automotive

products (29/9), and Travel (11/6). The largest decreases occurred in the Liquor and Smoking ads (40/2 and 16/7, respectively).

The most noticeable increases in the amount of ads with mature market persons occurred in the product/service category types of Drug and health care goods, Clothing and accessories, and Media attractions (17/26, 5/21, and 32/47, respectively).

Table 13

Comparison of Changes in the Magazine Ad Portrayal of the Mature Market in Product/Service Category Types Between 1980 and 1995

Product/Service Category Types	Year				
	1980		1995		1980/1995
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	% Change
Household, Autos, and Communications					
Household goods and appliances	14	4.2%	4	1.5%	-71%
Outdoor maintenance and repair items	4	1.2%	1	0.4%	-75%
Autos and automotive products	29	8.7%	9	3.3%	-69%
Electronic and office equipment	14	4.2%	16	5.8%	12%

(table continues)

Table 13 (cont.)

*Comparison of Changes in the Magazine Ad Portrayal of the
Mature Market in Product/Service Category Types
Between 1980 and 1995*

Product/Service Category Types	1980		1995		1980/1995
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	% Change
Alcohol and Tobacco					
Liquor	40	12.0%	2	0.7%	-95%
Smoking	16	4.8%	7	2.6%	-56%
Institutional and Monetary Affiliations					
Corporate image	75	22.4%	39	14.2%	-48%
Securities and credit	10	3.0%	34	12.4%	71%
Insurance	20	6.0%	12	4.4%	-40%
Education	1	0.2%	14	5.1%	93%
Health, Care, and Maintenance					
Drugs and health care goods	17	5.0%	26	9.5%	38%
Beauty aids and cosmetics	5	1.5%	9	3.3%	44%
Clothing and accessories	5	1.5%	21	7.7%	76%

(table continues)

Table 13 (cont.)

*Comparison of Changes in the Magazine Ad Portrayal of the
Mature Market in Product/Service Category Types
Between 1980 and 1995*

Product/Service Category Types	Year				
	1980		1995		1980/1995
	No. of Ads	%	No. of Ads	%	% Change
Health, Care, and Maint. (cont.)					
Infant care					
Pet foods and products	7	2.1%	0	0	-100%
Sports, Travel, and Media					
Recreation and sporting goods	1	0.2%	4	1.5%	75%
Travel	11	3.3%	6	2.2%	-45%
Media attractions	32	9.5%	47	17.1%	32%
Food, Beverage, and Other					
Food and non-alcohol beverages	31	9.3%	22	8.0%	-29%
Other	3	0.9%	1	0.3%	-67%
Totals	335	100%	274	100%	100%

Combined Activity Levels with Product/Service Categories

Table 14 (see page 83) displays changes in the activity level portrayal of the mature market within each product/service category from 1980 to 1995. Overall, the major shift in ad frequency for product/service advertisements occurred between the opposite ends of the activity level continuum; whereby, the very low activity level and the low activity level variables appeared less frequently as the very high activity level portrayal of the mature market increased within all categories except the category of Alcohol and Tobacco. The most prevalent decreases occurred in the medium activity level for product/service categories of Household, Autos, and Maintenance; Alcohol and Tobacco; Institutional and Monetary Affiliations; and Food, Beverages, and Others (22/10, 22/1, 51/37, and 21/10, respectively).

Table 14

Changes Between Distribution of Product/Service Category and Activity Level Magazine Ads of the Mature Market for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Activity Level	Product/Service Categories by Year										Totals by Year			
	Household Autos & Comms.	Alcohol and Tobacco	Inst'ns. and Money	Health Care & Maint.	Sports Travel & Media	Food Beverage & Other	80	95	80	95		80	95	
1. Very low	6	1	9	0	6	6	3	4	4	4	1	3	29	18
2. Low	1	1	6	2	5	3	8	2	2	1	2	2	24	11
3. Medium	22	10	22	1	51	37	8	28	19	26	21	10	143	112
4. High	31	14	11	5	36	42	11	13	19	21	10	7	118	102
5. Very high	1	4	8	1	8	11	4	9	0	5	0	1	21	31
Total	61	30	56	9	106	99	34	56	44	57	34	23	335	274

Note: N = 609 ads

Frequency and Percentage of the Mature Market in Ads

By 1995, the total amount of people in all ads had decreased by 3%; yet, the total amount of mature market in ads had decreased by 33%. The total number of mature market people in ads had decreased from 66% in 1980 to 34% of the total mature market in ads in 1995. The total representation of mature market people in comparison to all people in ads had decreased by 5.5% in 1995 (see Table 15 on page 84).

Table 15

Frequency and Percent of the Extent of Representation of the Mature Market (MM) in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Year	Number of MM in Ads		
	Total People in Ads	Total MM in Ads	% MM in Ads
1980	3,255	755	23.2%
1995	2,983	498	16.7%
1980/1995	6,238	1,253	20.0%

There was a 2% decrease in the amount of ads with all people compared to a 10% decrease in the amount of ads with mature market people from 1980 to 1995 (55% MM in 1980 and 45% MM in 1995). Overall, there was a 5% decrease in the amount of ads with the mature market relative to the amount of ads with all people (see Table 16 on page 85).

Table 16

Comparison of Frequency and Percentage of Appearance of the Mature Market (MM) in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Year	Number of Ads with MM		
	Total Ads with People	Total Ads with MM	% Ads with MM
1980	1,124	335	30%
1995	1,098	274	25%
1980/1995	2,222	609	27%

During the period of 1980 to 1995, the proportional representation of mature market men and women in magazine advertisements remained relatively constant with increases of 3% for men and decreases of 3% for women (see Table 17 on page 86).

The mature market constituted 23% of all people in ads in 1980 compared to 17% of all people in ads in 1995 (a 6% decrease over fifteen years). Furthermore, mature market women were 6% of all people in ads in 1980, whereas, by 1995, the representation of mature market women decreased by 2% to only 4% of all people in advertisements. The frequency of mature market men compared to all people in ads decreased by 4% by 1995 (17% to 13%, respectively).

Overall, for the total ads with mature market from 1980 and 1995, the number of mature market women decreased by 33% (208 to 124) and the frequency of mature market men has decreased by 24% (547 to 374) (see Table 18 on page 87).

Table 17

Proportional Representation of Mature Market (MM) Women and Men in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, and 1980/1995

Year	Number of MM Women/Men in Ads					
	MM Women in Ads		MM Men in Ads		Total MM in Ads	
	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%
1980	208	28%	547	72%	755	100%
1995	124	25%	374	75%	498	100%
1980/1995	332	26%	921	74%	1,253	100%

Table 18

Comparison of Frequency in Representation of the Mature Market (MM) in Magazine Ads for 1980, 1995, 1980/1995

Year	Representation of MM in Magazine Ads					
	People in Ads	MM in Ads	Ads with People	Ads with MM	MM Women in Ads	MM Men in Ads
1980	3,255	755	1,124	335	208	547
1995	2,983	498	1,098	274	124	374
1980/1995	6,238	1,253	2,222	609	332	921

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

Activity Levels

This study discusses the need for accurate activity level portrayals of the mature market in advertising. Social gerontology theories have described how the mature market translates activities into adapted lifestyles and then establishes roles of identity in societies. The creation and maintenance of attitudes that impact the quality of life for the mature market may be linked to advertising (Nussbaum, Thompson, & Robinson, 1989). The prominent social gerontologist, Atchley (1994), confirmed that some mature market persons learn concepts about aging through their exposure to advertising. Furthermore, semiotic theory was utilized to explain how message recipients decode the meaning of the message in advertisements. If some advertising serves to reinforce ageist attitudes, then inaccurate portrayal of the activity level portrayal of the mature market may affect the way some people feel about the mature market, and eventually, it may affect how they see themselves.

Since the mature market's population size has been increasing, and some activities of the mature market are being redefined, the exploration of the activity level of the mature market in advertising becomes apparent.

The intent of this study was to examine magazine advertisements in seven national, high circulation magazines to determine if there would be a change in the activity level portrayal of the mature market over a fifteen year period, 1980 to 1995. The activity levels were divided into 5 incremental levels of very low, low, medium, high, and very high.

Previous studies indicated that there have been both positive and negative increases in the advertising portrayal of the mature market over the last twenty years. Likewise, this may suggest that the activity level portrayal of the mature market may have also been accurate or inaccurate. Therefore, since a study of the activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements has not been attempted, this study examined the portrayal of the activity level of the mature market between two time periods, 1980 and 1995.

The results of this study demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the average activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements from 1980 to 1995. However, because the difference in the mean activity level scores between the time periods represented only a 4% (.21) change in the mean activity score, the difference was determined not to be of any practical significance.

The mean activity level scores for 1980 (3.07) and 1995 (3.28), represented a balanced, medium activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements. A closer examination of the results of this study showed that there were changes in the opposite end ranges of the activity level continuum from low to very low activity levels and high to very high activity levels over the fifteen year period. In summary, since 1980, the direction of the mature market at all activity levels has been towards higher activity level portrayals in national, high circulation magazines.

Because there are a relatively small number of advertisements on both ends of the activity level spectrum, the necessity of examination of the raw number of advertisements by percent of total for each activity level for the

two time periods should not be overlooked. Consequently, evaluation of advertisements by percentage change illuminates the value of this study.

For example, the very low and low activity levels decreased for the total number of advertisements in 1980 and 1995 by 22% and 42%, respectively; whereas, the activity levels for 1980 and 1995 of high and very high increased by 5% and 45%, respectively.

Therefore, when mean activity level scores are within the same range and both mean activity level scores are located around the mid-point of activity level, researchers must be attentive to the variations within the activity levels to properly ascertain accurate trends in the activity level portrayal of the mature market, especially if a comparative study were to be done in the future.

Before general conclusions may be made regarding the positive or negative direction of the activity level of the mature market, two implications should be considered . One, some advertisements have depicted mature market people as over zealous, hyperactive individuals. Two, social gerontologists have emphasized that mature market persons determine life satisfaction by making choices based on their personal lifestyles and appraisals of overall health and happiness. For example, some mature market people may chose to disengage more frequently than others while others chose to be socially and physically active. Therefore, the selection of a sedentary lifestyle over a highly physically active lifestyle may be one of choice rather than necessity.

The mature market are increasingly heterogeneous in some respects and increasingly homogeneous in other respects (Palmore, 1985). Likewise, if the activity level portrayal of the mature market were to weigh too heavily in

one direction, then the portrayal could be erroneous; therefore, it becomes evident that the activity level of the mature market should not be too negatively or positively stereotyped.

Another examination of the activity level portrayal of the mature market indicated that the majority of mean scores increased for magazines which is consistent with the results of the total activity level portrayal increase for magazines in this study for 1995.

Moreover, although the mean score of activity level for the mature market by magazine and year exhibited only small changes, the direction of change in activity level portrayal of the mature market in some magazines over the fifteen year period of this study exhibited noteworthy differences. For example, the two lowest mean activity level scores for 1980 were *People* and *Newsweek* magazines; however, *People* and *Newsweek* magazines demonstrated notable increases over the fifteen year period. This might indicate that since *People* and *Newsweek* are among the youngest median age of reader in the group of magazines in this study, the need to appeal to the increasingly large group of mature market persons has been acknowledged.

Fortune and *Better Homes and Gardens* were among the two highest median readership age in this study; both magazines increased in the mean activity level portrayal of the mature market in 1980 and 1995 by .36 and .31, respectively. As a result, the increases might be an indication that the need to recognize the active, healthy lifestyles of the mature market have been confirmed throughout the years.

The largest decrease in the mean activity level scores occurred within *Esquire* magazine (33.7%) which was the youngest medium age of readers in this study. Perhaps the decrease in mean activity level portrayal of the mature

market in magazine advertisements represents that it could have represented a youth image in advertising while simultaneously neglecting active aging.

Several changes occurred in the frequency of advertisements portraying the specific activity level types of the mature market from 1980 to 1995.

Some interesting trends were observed that might have future implications in the accuracy of the portrayal of the mature market in advertising. Within the 5 activity level ranges, the most noticeable decreases in the percentages of advertisements occurred in the specific activity types (percentage change in parentheses) of Rest and relaxation (-68%), Social--romance (-50%), Social--family/friends (-39%), Personal maintenance (-59%), Travel (-17%), and Housework--outdoor (-34%) in which all represent restful, leisurely activities. Conversely, almost all the high activity level types increased or remained equal. In addition, the activity level types of Work--ordinary and the Work--professional were substantially maintained, especially in terms of raw ad count, and Educational ads were introduced. Lastly, Purchasing ads were increased by 67% in 1995.

This overall trend not only confirms a slight upward direction in activity levels, but it also could be signifying the proliferation of the advertising portrayal of the mature market person as independent, industrious, and recreationally active with less time for social gatherings, resting, traveling, gardening, and personal maintenance activities. This could be an indication that advertisers are increasing the amount of representation of the mature market in new types of socio-economic influences in advertisements in the 21st century.

Palmore (1985) and Atchley (1995) maintained that the two most important factors in determining life satisfaction for the mature market were

monetary and social factors such as close proximity to family and friends. Yet, although today's mature market person is becoming healthier and more financially independent they, are also experiencing more divorce, smaller family sizes, and independent lifestyles.

Advertising is reflecting a new socio-economically changing image of the mature market person. Perhaps the advertising portrayals of the mature market as a homogeneous and dependent group with countless hours for traveling, gardening, resting, and personal maintenance are transforming into advertising portrayals of active, independent, individual persons capable of choosing from several lifestyles.

Although the percent changes in activity level appear relatively large, the mean activity level score demonstrated a statistically significant difference which was not practically significant enough to represent one-half of an activity level difference. However, upon further evaluation, this study provided evidence that increases in the activity levels occurred toward the higher end of the activity level spectrum. This may indicate that if this trend continues, advertisers could mold the activity level portrayal of the mature market into a mass, homogeneous, one-directional image. Conversely, advertisers might more quickly acknowledge the variety of lifestyles and multifaceted aspects of the mature market.

Product/Service Categories

This study also explored the relationship between the mature market's portrayal in activity levels and product/service advertisements. Since activities by the mature market are roles, and because understanding the roles that accompany aging may improve advertising effectiveness, it becomes important to examine the relationship between activity level portrayals and

products. Because consumers only purchase products with brand images consistent with themselves, ultimately, inaccurate activity level portrayal could have a negative effect on purchase behavior.

Although most changes in the activity levels occurred toward the very low and very high end of the activity level continuum, in reference to the relationship between activity levels and product categories, the most notable changes occurred within the medium activity level. Between 1980 and 1995, for example, the frequency of advertisements in the medium activity level decreased in 4 out of the 6 product/service categories: Household, Autos, and Communications (22/10), Alcohol and Tobacco (22/1), Institutions and Monetary Affiliations (51/37), and Food , Beverage, and Other (21/10). The decreases in ads in each category were so pronounced that it outweighed the argument that the occurrence of less ads in most of the medium activity level category was because there were less ads in 1995.

The results support the conclusion that although the mean activity score for 1995 is a medium range of 3.28, advertisers have been dramatically reducing the amount of ads that portray the mature market person engaging in medium activity levels for most product/service ads. The results of this study explained the redistributed ad placements in a proportionately higher amount of very low, high, and especially very high activity levels.

Yet, the use of mature market people in medium product/service category ads continues to remain the highest while the dominance in the medium and high activity levels between 1980 and 1995 is establishing parity. The unexpected results may be explained by a closer merging of medium, high, and very high activity levels in product/service ads with more discrepancy among the medium, low, and very low activity level portrayals of

the mature market in magazine ads. This change could be due to advertisers taking higher risks by depicting the mature market person in a wider range of activity levels instead of an averaged, compromised, middle approach. Since this is the first study that examines the relationship of activity levels to product/service categories, it will be interesting to see if a significant change occurs in the future.

In a previous study by Gantz et al. (1980), the researchers examined the portrayal of the mature market in product categories in national, high circulation magazines. Although the Gantz et al. findings provided a framework for this study, only general similarities may be compared because the number and definitions of categories were changed. The findings from this study showed some marked differences in the frequency of portrayals of the mature market in the top six product/service categories. For example, In 1980 the top six product/service categories with the most ads portraying the mature market person, in order, were (percent frequencies of ads in parentheses) Corporate image (22.4%), Liquor (12%), Media attractions (9.5%), Food and non-alcoholic beverages (9.3%), Autos and automotive products (8.7%), and Drugs and health care goods (5%); whereas, in 1995 the top six product/service categories with the most ads portraying the mature market person, in order, were Media attractions (17.1%), Corporate image (14.2%), Securities and credit (12.4%), Drugs and health care (9.5%), Food and non-alcohol beverages (8%), and Clothing and accessories (7.7%).

Some noteworthy differences may be pointed out between the top six product/service categories during the 15 year period of this study. First of all, the amount of Alcohol and Tobacco ads have drastically reduced because of legal restrictions of advertising, medical discoveries related to the detrimental

effects of smoking and drinking, social forces against the use of drinking and smoking, increased public service campaigns educating people about risk-behavior choices, and more comprehensive cost-effective promotional strategies by the tobacco and alcohol advertising industries.

Other prominent differences between the top six product/service categories from 1980 to 1995 were in Corporate image, Securities and credit, and Clothing and accessories. The frequency of the portrayal of the mature market in Corporate image ads decreased by over 40% over fifteen years. Moreover, while Corporate image ads were the second most frequently used for portraying the mature market in 1995, this category became more balanced, moderately portrayed in relation to the top six ads. Two explanations for this change are that diversity of lifestyles and activity of the mature market person are proliferating, and advertisers are recognizing that the advertising portrayals of the mature market need to represent the mature market as an active, independent, and heterogeneous group.

Security and credit ads entered the top six product/service categories probably because the increasing number of mature market people are planning for longer, healthier, and more active lives. As a result, a competitive marketing environment has emerged toward enticing the mature market person to make investments that reflect the activities of the market which controls over 50% of the nation's discretionary income and 63% of the U.S. wealth.

Increases in the Drug and health care goods, Clothing and accessories, and Media attractions product/service categories all reflected a more realistic portrayal of the mature market person in terms of frequency of ads. An increase in the Clothing and accessory category may indicate that advertisers

have increasingly continued to acknowledge the diversity of mature market people who require a variety of clothing to match their lifestyles and activities.

Only decades ago, people over 50 were preparing for retirement because life expectancy was shorter; therefore, people and society planned accordingly. In today's society, some of the old beliefs are still valued. Because life expectancy has increased, people are living longer, healthier, more productive lives. For these reasons, people are starting families in later years or choosing not to marry. People are also changing careers and reeducating themselves through formal, technical, and business institutions in mid-life. Therefore, the product/service category of Education was added to monitor any changes in the frequency of portrayal of mature market people in magazine advertisements. The results of this study demonstrated an increase in Education ads from 1 ad in 1980 to 14 ads in 1995.

Another product/service category that demonstrated large decreases was the Household, Autos, and Communications. The results of this category may indicate that advertising may be perpetuating myths that people over 55 are more brand loyal, they are least likely to experiment with new products and services, they are unable to not make major purchases in relatively short periods of time, they refuse to learn how to use new products/services, and they have difficulty learning how to use unfamiliar, more highly technological products and services. These beliefs are ageist because they could pertain to all people who chose to only engage in familiar settings, products, and technologies. However, lack of sufficient advertising in the area of Household, Autos, and Communications product/service category could be a reenactment of the social breakdown model (Kypers & Bengston, 1973)

which is based on labeling theory. In essence, if it is believed by advertisers that the mature market is not a good candidate for products/services based on the reasons mentioned above, then insufficient and inaccurate portrayal of the activity level may initiate some of the myths into reality simply because it leads to (1) lack of knowledge of product/service existence by the mature market person, (2) lack of the portrayal of the usage of a product/service by the mature market person, and (3) which eventually leads to lack of product/service engagement or involvement by the mature market.

Unfortunately, the perpetual cycle of the self-fulfilling prophecy may continue until advertising engages in more frequent and accurate activity level portrayals of the mature market.

Frequencies and Percentages of the Mature Market

Another aspect of this study involved an examination of the amount and percent of the mature market in advertisements, in the gender of the mature market portrayal in advertisements, and in advertisements that contain mature market people.

The importance of accurate representation of mature market people in advertisements becomes more apparent when it is considered that during the next 25 years, the 50-plus age group will grow 74% while the group younger than 50 will increase by only 1%. In a 1980 exploration of the portrayal of the mature market in national, high circulation magazine advertisements by Gantz et al. (1980), the researchers reported that in comparison to the size of the U.S. population, the mature market were under-represented in magazine advertisements. A three year follow-up study by Kvasnicka et al. (1982) had comparable results. In this study the concern is not only how the mature market are represented in sheer numbers compared to the population of U.S.,

but also with the portrayal of the mature market in relationship to the current demographic transformations of the mature market.

Gantz et al. (1980) found that only 5.9% of the ads contained mature market people while only 3.1% of the people in the ads were mature market people. Likewise, Kvasnicka et al. (1982) discovered that only 8% of the ads contained mature market people while only 4.1% of the people in the ads were mature market people. The results of the Gantz et al. (1980) and the Kvasnicka et al. (1982) studies will not be directly compared because of differences in the operational variable, the difference in size, and variation in magazine selection. However, general conclusions may be expanded on because of the similar nature of the studies such as the use of national, high circulation magazines, the study of the mature market, and the examination of a large amount of ads.

The Gantz et al. (1980) and Kvasnicka et al. (1982) studies provided results that revealed a smaller amount of proportional representation of the mature market people compared to the results of this study because the definition of the mature market in the Gantz et al. (1980) and the Kvasnicka et al. (1982) studies was different from the operational definition provided in this study. For example, in the Gantz et al. (1980) and the Kvasnicka et al. (1982) studies, the “elderly” definition excluded the age ranges of 55-65. Moreover, not only did the term “elderly” in the two studies imply negative stereotypical connotations, but most of the suggestions for coder recognition of the “elderly” were biased by leading coders to observing debilitating, physically inactive characteristics of the older segment of the population.

Conversely, this study was constructed to observe all levels of activities that included the ages of 55-65, and to provide expanded definitions

of physical activities and social interactions. Coder recognition of the mature market and the coding results proved consistency in identification of the mature market and in the recommended intercoder reliability for the nature of this study.

Therefore, in the results of the frequency of the mature market in this study for 1980, it was found that only 22.2% of the ads contained mature market people while only 30% of the people in the ads were mature market people. The surprising findings from 1995 bring a concern regarding the representation of the mature market people in national, high circulation magazine advertisements: Only 16.7% of the ads contained mature market people while only 25% of the people in the ads were mature market people. Overall, the representation of the mature market in advertisements decreased from 22.2% to 16.7% over a 15 year period.

When the demographic factors, activity and lifestyle studies, and the population figures signal an exponentially increasing change of the mature market segment, an examination of the factors influencing the decreased representation of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines merits examination.

During the last fifteen years, several changes have occurred that explain possible reasons for the unexpected shift in the decreased frequency of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines. The changes stem from theoretical and practical viewpoints.

There has been a tremendous growth in market segmentation practices, and as a result, resources for targeting specific markets have augmented to meet the demand. For example, specialized magazines targeted to the mature market such as *Fifty Plus*, *Modern Maturity*, *Retirement Life* and *Retirement*

Living have propagated even more target specific, specialized magazines that isolate specific interests, activities, and lifestyles for the mature market segment. It is conceivable that some product/service advertisers have developed several different ads directed to various age ranges of market segments for one product/service. Consequently, more advertising expenditure has been transferred from national, high circulation magazines, and ad placement has been reallocated to specialized magazines.

Technological advances have transformed the relationship between advertising reach potential and product marketing. With more media vehicles available, media planners and buyers may develop more comprehensive media plans. As a result, there is more diverse media placement coupled with more sophisticated promotional and purchasing tracking systems that could also explain a decrease in the frequency of advertising portrayal of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines.

Another reason the frequency of the mature market has declined in national, high circulation magazines is that targeting decisions, creative execution, and media selection may be based on cognitive/perceptual age of the mature market person. Media decision makers may have found that application of the cognitive age concept has provided a solution to reaching the 55+ market. Many experts advise using people ten to fifteen years younger than the targeted mature market in advertisements, and other researchers cautioned advertisers that if older models are used, then advertisers might not report greater effectiveness.

In conjunction with the possibility of some advertisers implementing cognitive age concepts in media decisions, the low risk factor of maintaining the status quo might explain why advertisers are using the mature market less

frequently in national, high circulation magazines. For example, some advertisers may be reluctant to use mature market people in ads because they fear that the younger segment of the market might react negatively toward the product or service.

It is important to note that the frequency and percentage comparisons of the mature market over a fifteen year period in this study are extremely valuable for examination of total representation of the mature market relative to all people in ads. However, the 5% decrease in the amount of ads with mature market people over the fifteen year period did not effect the type of representation in terms of activity level of mature market people because the examination of semiotic perspective is the same for 200 ads or 400 ads.

The results of the disproportional representation of mature market women in national, high circulation magazine advertisements was a consternation which merits discussion. The researcher expected to see an increase in the advertising portrayal of mature market women. However, the results of this study proved contrary. During the fifteen year period of this study, the frequency of mature market women in ads, compared to all people in ads, reduced from 6% to 4% while decreasing from 28% of the total mature market in ads in 1980 to 25% of total mature market people in ads in 1995. Women are living longer, healthier, productive lives. Mature market women outlive mature market men, they are reaching higher levels of education, and they are living more financially and socially independent lifestyles. Newer generations of mature market women continue to redefine social, economic, and work concepts. In addition, mature market women are decision makers at all levels of product/service purchasing. The mature

market women segment is, evidently, disproportionately portrayed in national, high circulation magazine advertisements.

Directions for Future Research

The findings from this study could serve as a basis for further research and establish guideposts for studying the mature market in both academia and advertising. It is suggested that the activity level portrayal of the mature market may be submitted to critical testing over minimal periods of five years.

The key contribution of this study for the framework of future research was the development of the activity level scale for advertising portrayal of the mature market. It is hoped that the activity level scale will be applied to further research of the mature market in quantitative, qualitative, and combined quantitative/qualitative formats of study.

To extend the present study, further research could be developed that explores the activity level portrayal of the mature market in both national, high circulation magazines and specialized magazines at various age groups.

Additionally, a survey of the mature market could be implemented for the purpose of comparing the mature market's lifestyle activity patterns with their perceptions of the lifestyle activity patterns in magazine advertisements. Results of the survey could reveal how attention to placement of activities in an advertisement may assist in defining the mature market in advertising.

Purchase pattern behavior of the mature market could be evaluated by their lifestyle and activity patterns. There needs to be continual research that gauges the relationship of activity levels to product/services because brand preference may be determined by how well a product enables consumers to establish personal and social identity.

Moreover, future research could be conducted with group surveys of the mature market that explore the semiotic process. It would be interesting to see how mature market people react to a product/service advertisement that portrays the activity level of the mature market person in several different ways.

Another study could explore if the mature market people's cognitive/perceptual levels and their actual activities match their preferred portrayals of activity levels in magazine advertisements. Likewise, it would be interesting to see a comparative piece of research which examined the responses of different age groups toward the activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements.

Researchers might be encouraged to implement more frequent analyses of percentages and frequencies of the mature market to better reach this rapidly changing segment of the population. In addition, the subsegments of mature market persons such as women, minorities, and various cultures need to be addressed in national, high circulation magazines and magazines targeted to the mature market to detect the activity level portrayal of the mature market. The research could determine if the advertisements promote positive, self-esteem building activity portrayals, or if the advertisements propagate biased and discriminatory attitudes. It will be interesting to see how the responses of mature market women differ from women of other age groups.

Since the meaning of aging varies in different cultures, and because international and global changes are proliferating, an area of future research should involve an examination of how the various levels of activities of the mature market are portrayed in media throughout different cultures. It could

be advantageous for marketing professionals and message recipients if advertisers had concrete, retrievable research in which to base campaign strategies; as a result, the activity level portrayal of the mature market could become more effective in local, regional, national, and international communications campaigns. Knowledge of the activity levels of these various groups could provide more effective advertising campaigns in a culturally diverse market where there is access to a gamut of target market, media vehicles.

There is enormous potential for future research in semiotic theory as it relates to the activity level portrayal of the mature market in advertising in the next decade. Not only could it change the advertising industry and promote research in other fields of discipline, but it might change society's perception of the activity level of the mature market.

Any future research in the activity level portrayal of the mature market should be encouraged to incorporate some of these suggestions. A better understanding may lead to advertising strategies that consider the most accurate presentation of activity levels of the mature market. Through additional research, it is hoped that the activity level image of the mature market person contributes to positive self-image, accurate social perceptions of the mature market, and eventually a positive relationship between the advertising of product/services and the mature market consumer.

Ultimately, future research on the activity level of the mature market should stimulate a merging of scientific thoughts that could develop semiotic theory, as it applies to advertising and image research, while adding credence to cognitive and behavioral theories.

Conclusions

This study conducted on seven national, high circulation magazines indicates the portrayal of the mature market in activity level portrayals in magazine advertisements is slightly increasing. The researcher expected a low activity portrayal of 2.0-2.5 during the fifteen year period of this study. However, the mean activity level score of 3.07 in 1980 significantly increased to a mean activity level score of 3.28 in 1995. This suggests that the national, high circulation magazine activity level portrayal of the mature market may reinforce a medium, moderately active self-image in the eyes of some mature market persons. It is important to remember that if the activity level were to increase to higher levels, then there may be indications that the activity level portrayal of mature market persons could be inaccurate. The researcher concluded that an activity level of approximately 3.0 signified an accurate portrayal of mature market persons.

Overall, the results of this study indicated that over a fifteen year period, the activity level portrayal of the mature market in national, high circulation magazines has increased while the frequency of mature market people in ads has decreased. The medium activity level appeared less frequently in product/service advertisements which suggested that more advertisers may have been including a wider range of activities since 1980.

The types of activities the mature market were portrayed in suggests that mature market persons are more independent, industrious, and recreationally active with less time for social gatherings, resting, traveling, and personal maintenance activities.

The most dramatic changes in product/service types of advertisements occurred in the Alcohol and Tobacco product/service category which resulted

in a change from high frequency to a mere existence. In addition, although Corporate image ads are still leading in frequency of mature market portrayal, they have been reduced by almost half the amount. The Education ads were among the newest and fastest in growth.

The alarming discovery that the frequency of mature market people, and especially mature market women, has decreased over the last fifteen years may indicate that media placement has changed or that more younger people are being portrayed in advertisements of products/services. An inadequate activity level portrayal of the mature market, perpetuated by a youth image in advertising, may impact the receptiveness of the mature market audience. However, accurate activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements might maintain, encourage, or sustain activity and continuity for mature market people who might have otherwise subscribed to societal disengagement. In addition, positive portrayals of the mature market in magazine advertising may be helpful in promoting a positive self-image and a more active lifestyle in society; whereas, inaccurate activity level portrayals of the mature market may accentuate misconceptions of the mature market.

This research added to the body of knowledge and filled a gap in the available literature about the portrayals of activity levels of the mature market, and it should be of interest to advertising, media, marketing, social gerontology, and other related interdisciplinary fields.

Consumer researchers are encouraged to investigate and fulfill the promising contribution semiotics may make to the advertising industry. More advanced applications related to the semiological process by advertisers is suggested because advertiser's use of cognitive age principles may enrich

people's knowledge and understanding of the mature market's self-concepts, attitudes and behaviors. Overall, when cognitive age variables are used in conjunction with chronological age, advertising strategies can achieve more effective targeting, ad creations, and media selections.

In forming advertisements, the creator personalizes the meaning, and when the advertisement is interpreted, it is once again personalized. In other words, advertisers personalize messages in the same process as when the perception of the activity level is originally interpreted, and this cycle of cultural reinforcement continues indeterminately.

The role a mature market person has available to make in a given situation is limited by the roles made by other people; therefore, accurate activity level portrayal of mature market persons in magazine advertisements may expand or limit perceptions and activities by the media audience.

Gantz et al. (1980) predicted that the mature market would not play a major role in consumer society because of the scarcity of their representation in magazine advertisements and all media as well. Therefore, since the activity patterns of people may be manifested by objects in advertising (Jhally, 1987), particular attention must be given in the development of advertising toward the mature market.

Marketing decision makers must continue developing an understanding of the intricacies of marketing and advertising strategies to mature market people. Product/service advertisements will not fare well if they are inconsistent with the self-image of the mature market person. Exaggerated activity level portrayal of the mature market in either direction may be subject to rejection of product consumption. Cynical and discriminatory behavior may result from not only other age groups but also mature market people.

Inappropriate portrayals of the mature market are a great disservice to the mature market and younger people who have had little experience with aging.

If advertising influences part of our thought processes about the world in which we live, then meticulous planning of the most accurate activity level portrayals of the mature market must endure. Advertising's portrayal of the mature market will continue to change in several ways: One, because of the statistically projected increases in the mature market's population, economic and social activity, and increased awareness of lifestyle activities, advertisers will need to adopt a more proactive strategy in reaching the mature market segment; two, dual-promotional mixes that reach different age segments of the mature market may be an effective solution to lifestyle differences among the mature market though the product may be exactly the same; three, the transgenerational approach, which is a combination of younger and older people in the same advertisement, could be increased to help socially integrate the mature market with other age groups; four, advertisers need to continue learning about the social and cultural ramifications of accurate or inaccurate messages to not only the mature market segment, but to people of all ages; and five, magazine advertisements are still lagging in attention given to mature market women in comparison to the percentage of mature market women in the population.

It will be interesting to see how well companies will fare that have applied more cognitive-based approaches toward the activity level portrayal of the mature market in their advertisements. This could influence the mature market persons' perceptions and actions toward a company or product. Competition for the market share of the mature market segment will intensify,

and therefore, thoughtful, accurate, and positive activity level portrayals of mature market persons may encourage purchases.

Even as advertisers continue to develop strategies based on cognitive age concepts, the percentage of advertisements with mature market people should increase in the next fifteen years because as the younger portion of the mature market age, advertisements to attract them using cognitive age concepts could eventually involve mature market people.

If the activity level portrayal of the mature market is accurately keeping pace with current activity levels of the mature market, then a positive, productive relationship may be established among the advertising creator, the advertisement, and the message recipient. If, however, the advertising activity level portrayal negatively or positively misrepresents the activity level of the mature market, then the message could influence the message recipients attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.

Advertising may work as an instrument for encouraging change in the perception of the mature market. The activity level image portrayal of the mature market is only one factor in how they view themselves and how others view them. However, at a time when it appears that the activity level portrayal of the mature market in magazine advertisements is moving toward a positive direction, further understanding of how semiotic theory, labeling theory, the social breakdown model, could enhance the relationship between the message, the meaning, and the message recipient. Advertising portrayal of the mature market may influence how the mature market see themselves, how others see the mature market, and how others, eventually, see themselves.

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Appendix A

Magazine Readership Demographics

Magazines	Circulation	Readership Total U.S. '000	Median age		Employment Avc. Income	Employment Avc. Income	Gender		Age: % of Readers							
			M/F	M			F	M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
BH&G	7,616,270	34,790	44.2	44.7	44.0		Ind.	HH	M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Family Circle	5,000,000	25,000	45.3	47.5	45.0	\$18,409	\$37,581	11	89	7.2	18.3	25.6	18.5	13.7	16.6	
Newsweek	3,228,231	20,720	41.2	41.1	41.4	\$26,914	\$47,239	55	45	11.1	20.7	26.1	18.0	11.4	12.8	
Time	4,000,000	18,600	41.9	41.6	42.2	\$24,877	\$43,924	52	48	12.8	24.8	23.3	16.5	10.4	12.2	
People	3,300,000	33,600	38.3	37.6	38.7	\$22,153	\$43,720	36	64	16.9	26.6	25.9	14.8	7.9	7.9	
Fortune	804,754	3,489	41.3	41.4	40.9	\$19,638	\$63,283	66	34	7.6	22.5	26.0	20.3	13.2	10.4	
Esquire	650,000	2,900	27.9	38.8	36.2	\$20,804	\$36,155	60	40	13.8	33.2	20.8	12.6	11.3	8.2	

Figures from Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. (1993; 1996) and SRDS (1995).

Appendix C

Activity Levels Scoring Sheet

1. Very Low Activity = 1
 - A. Disengagement
 - B. Sleeping
 - C. Rest/Relaxation
2. Low Activity = 2
 - A. Religion
 - B. Personal Maintenance
3. Medium Activity = 3
 - A. Educational
 - B. Sports/Entertainment Spectating
 - C. Social--romance
 - D. Social--family/friends
 - E. Traveling
 - F. Purchasing
4. High Activity = 4
 - A. Childcare--volunteer work
 - B. Housework--indoor
 - C. Housework--outdoor
 - D. Work--ordinary
 - E. Work--professional
5. Very High Activity = 5
 - A. Recreational/Leisure
 - B. Walking
 - C. Golf
 - D. Biking
 - E. Sports
 - F. Other

Appendix D

Product Categories Scoring Sheet

1. Household, Autos, and Communications = 1
 - A. Household Goods and Appliances
 - B. Outdoor Maintenance and Repair Items
 - C. Autos and Automotive Products
 - D. Electronic and Office Equipment
2. Alcohol and Tobacco = 2
 - A. Liquor
 - B. Smoking
3. Institutions and Monetary Affiliations = 3
 - A. Corporate Image
 - B. Securities and Credit
 - C. Insurance
 - D. Education
4. Health, Care, and Maintenance = 4
 - A. Drugs and Health Care Goods
 - B. Beauty Aids and Cosmetics
 - C. Clothing and Accessories
 - D. Infant Care
 - E. Pet Foods and Pet Products
5. Sports, Travel, and Media = 5
 - A. Recreation/Sporting Goods
 - B. Travel
 - C. Media attractions
6. Food, Beverage, and Other = 6
 - A. Food and Non-Alcohol Beverages
 - B. Other