

Could advertisements for cars influence our travel choices?

A review of car advertisements and the
targeting of different audiences

Introduction

This study looks at examples of promotional advertising used by the motor industry and reports on the findings of a review of television, newspaper and magazine advertisements. It also provides a brief introduction to marketing methods and the concept of target markets, to begin to consider whether travel choices could be affected by advertising campaigns.

The popularity of cars and their effectiveness as a mode of transport has been demonstrated over the last 50 years by the growth in car ownership and use. This growth in ownership is also occurring because of changing lifestyles, including increased incomes, greater disposable income and greater female participation in the workforce. People's lives have also become busier. Time is a valuable commodity and the benefits that the car can bring including increased personal mobility and access to activities, protection from the weather and security, coupled with 50 years of under investment and policies to rationalise the public transport system have all increased the popularity and subsequent 'necessity' of cars.

Despite these benefits to car use, transport issues are at the top of the political agenda. Cars have allowed more people to travel more often and over greater distances. This increase in car trips has been identified as the single most influential contributor to increased energy consumption, global warming and acid precipitation (Royal Commission, 1995). This has led to environmental and health campaigners questioning whether we need to use cars as much as we do, especially in light of the fact that 60% of trips are under 5 miles, trips that could be made by other modes of transport (Royal Commission 1995). This paper also takes a look at what some manufacturers are doing to address these issues.

The growing debate over the last 25 years has provided forecasts of traffic growth and suggested a number of potential solutions for promoting the use of walking, cycling and public transport use. But the car is no longer just a means of transport. It has evolved from a luxury household item to a personal possession, capable of being tailored to the owner's different needs and desire. This finds the car industry in a difficult position. As an important employer and contributor to the economic performance of car manufacturing nations and as a provider

of a consumer good, there is a desire to protect the industry, but there is also a recognition that increasing levels of car use cannot be sustained - environmentally, socially or economically.

Cars, cars, fast, fast! One is seized, filled with enthusiasm, with joy the joy of power. The simple and naïve pleasure of being in the midst of power, of strength One has confidence in this new society: it will find a magnificent expression of its power. One believes in it.

Le Corbusier 1929

literature review

A literature review has been conducted, and although there is an increasing wealth of literature about mobility, car dependency, psychology of driving, the cost of a car culture and also links between advertising and purchasing, little appears to have been written linking advertising and our travel behaviour.

There are two studies that have addressed the issue of advertising and are most relevant to this study. The first is a paper entitled 'De-marketing the car' (Wright and Egan, 2000) and the second is a series of studies conducted by the Automobile Association (AA) in the early 1990s (Automobile Association 1992, 1993).

de marketing the car

'De - marketing the car' is of direct importance because it directly addresses the use of advertising as a means of affecting travel choice. The paper advocates the use of propaganda to persuade key sections of the community *not* to use the car. In their paper the authors identify the purpose of this proposal - to encourage greater use of other modes, discourage travel, discourage car use and discourage people buying cars.

In support of this proposal the paper draws parallels with the successes of government campaigns to warn against the dangers of smoking tobacco and animal rights activists campaigns against wearing animal fur. However, as identified earlier, there is a desire to protect the motor manufacturing industry, and any campaign that affects its viability will need to be sensitive to all the issues and this is something that the authors are keen to do, not attacking the car directly. The paper suggests that it will be easier to influence car use rather than car ownership. The two main ways of doing this being to influence the daily commute to work which, with all things being equal varies very little; and the frivolous trips that distance wise at least could be completed on foot or by bicycle.

Automobile Association

Through the early 1990s, the AA conducted a series of annual studies to examine the compliance of car adverts in the national press with European guidance. The guidance, in the form of a Resolution by the European Conference of Ministers of Transport calls upon those who advertise motor vehicles to do so in a responsible manner and which promotes road safety and protection of the environment. This is important guidance not only because it allows an assessment of whether the car industry has been responsible in its advertising campaigns but also because it identified that there might be a link between advertisements and people's behaviour.

The AA study assessed 13 television and 68 newspaper adverts and deemed one quarter of the newspaper adverts to be 'inappropriate' and not in accordance with the Resolution. The research also looked for links between adverts and the attitudes of teenagers towards car ownership and driving. The research focused on teenagers because of the belief that for many of them, the car is regarded an important 'badge' of adulthood and it was felt that they may be more receptive to advertisements and the messages they communicate. Teenagers might also be saving money to pay for driving lessons and possibly buy a car of their own. Cars are an expensive investment and adverts are not just for those who want to buy a car

now, but also serve to place ideas in the heads of those planning to buy in the next 3 or 4 years.

However, the results of the research showed that most of the teenagers in the focus groups did not perceive themselves to be the target of car advertising, even in the role of tomorrow's customers. The research did find gender differences in the reactions to adverts. Young males had a greater interest in speed and danger. The study concluded that

although it is extremely difficult to gauge directly what influence media coverage may have on young driver behaviour, it would appear that any influence, if it does exist, is likely to be an adverse effect.

The Automobile Association, 1992

In January 1993, the Independent Television Commission introduced a revised code for vehicle advertising. The guidelines covered subjects such as the Highway Code, how to portray off-road sequences, speed and acceleration, racing and rallying and demonstrating safety features. As a result of this, the AA study conducted in 1993 noted that it observed a small improvement in advertising practices.

Marketing Strategies

The purpose of advertising is to increase the familiarity of people with companies and the products they sell with the ultimate aim of influencing your next purchase decision in favour of a particular product. Obviously we are all different and have different needs and desires, which is why behind advertising campaigns there is a more strategic marketing strategy. The constituent parts of a marketing strategy include

- Research and design
- Pricing strategies

- Identification of target markets
- The point of sale
- Promotional advertising and product placement.

Cars are an expensive investment and one of the biggest people make, so the manufacturers have to gauge the market and what is needed. The motor industry has particularly well developed strategies because it can be several years between a concept on the drawing board and a vehicle in the show room. This study also looks at whether the industry has gone the step further and manipulated our desires to turn them into needs to make the predictions of what product to supply less risky.

Product development

Key elements of the marketing strategy begin at the product development stage. A thorough understanding of customer requirements is critical in determining a vehicle's future features and design and ultimately its desirability factor. Market research plays an important role in this process, showing a distinct focus on providing what different target markets find important in a vehicle. This process can include customer questionnaires, product 'clinics' and the use of prototype vehicles.

Pricing strategy

Cars need to be within the affordable budget of the target market. If prices are set too high, cars will not sell. A pricing strategy is therefore an equally important but more difficult part of the marketing strategy. Pricing strategies consist of strategic and tactical elements. Strategic pricing strategies are linked to product development, focusing on the perceptions of value. A brand positioning strategy forms part of the strategic pricing. For example, at the product development stage, the Vauxhall Tigra was perceived to be an 'exotic sports car' for the wealthy, so pricing to make it affordable to a wider market was important. Tactical pricing is linked to the promotion of cars based on supply and demand, attempting to stimulate more

demand. Examples include offers of 1 years free insurance, cash back and low or no interest finance deals.

Adverts employing tactical pricing strategies are aimed at those who are hoping to buy in the next few months and will require information about price and financing. Younger drivers may be more receptive to these offers if it makes the initial outlay on buying a car appear to be cheaper.

target markets

A target audience is identified at the product development stage. Target audiences are generally categorised by age, gender, affluence and whether the car is for a family or an individual. For example, smaller, cheaper cars are targeted towards first time buyers and young drivers or as a second family car, typically as the 'run about'. The increasing number of women buying their own cars has made them a target audience for these smaller cars. A survey commissioned by Dial to help predict future resale value of cars found that 63% of women drive Micra / Fiesta class cars.

promotional advertising and product placement

The most wide - ranging marketing strategy is the use of promotional advertising and includes product placement. Product placement raises the profile of cars in the public image and can include lending a car to a high profile sports star whose picture will appear in newspapers and television programmes, sponsorship of events or company vehicles and the use of a particular vehicle in a film or television series. This forms a connection in people's minds between the skill and success of this person with the type of car they drive.

Cars have also been much sought after objects in films. This global publicity reaches a wide section of the public, a classic example of which is the use of luxury cars in James Bond films. Traditionally James Bond has been provided with a state of the art custom made British made car, typically the Austin Martin and Lotus Esprit. However, in the recent Bond films 'Tomorrow Never Dies' and 'The World is not Enough', James Bond drives a BMW, a German car, and

this sparked a debate as to whether this was unpatriotic and diluted his image a true British Gent. This debate demonstrates how product placement can go way beyond conventional advertising and how connections are made between people and the importance of their car.

Continuing with BMW as an example, it is a company who since 1979 has always focused upon what you are getting when you buy one of its cars. The brand has been built on the four core values of technology, quality, performance and exclusivity. Immediately, the desire to associate with James Bond becomes clear. These values are emphasised throughout BMWs advertising in the media by picturing well-maintained roads with freshly painted lines, a smooth surface and immaculate verges. In 1999 a new core value of the driver has been added, demonstrating the shift in focus from the product to the owner and the demands that a driver places upon his or her vehicle.

he oint of sale

Although well - trained staff and a welcoming show room will still be important in encouraging people to look at cars, marketing strategies are increasingly embracing the use of the Internet as a resource to provide detailed information about cars. Not only can up to date information about products and services besought, there is also the ability to order and purchase a vehicle 'on line'. Pricing strategies are also being employed to provide finance deals and related products such as insurance and breakdown cover in a package that can be purchased all at the same time.

n assessment of recent car mar etin

Methodology

A total of 129 television, newspaper and magazine advertisements were recorded between January 2000 and January 2001. A subjective assessment was made of each advert to consider the signals that were being received about the vehicles. The signals were categorised to provide a basis for discussion of the most and least commonly used themes.

The average length of a television commercial is 30 seconds. In this short period of time, one would expect a presentation with a clear, concise or simple message that provides us with enough information to be able to begin forming an opinion of the product. Adverts in newspapers and magazines take a different approach. Everything that the manufacturer wants to say about the product has to be captured in one image. Press advertising is however, a more suitable media for providing more detailed information about the vehicle such as the details of dealers and telephone numbers, prices and finance deals. Different newspapers and magazines also have their own particular target audiences, so adverts can be tailored to the expected reader.

Because of the two different media reviewed, the assessment was done in two different ways. The first was to review a range of newspapers and magazines to test the assumption made that because each would have a different target audience the adverts would be tailored to the target audience. The second method was to consider the themes and signals from all the television and printed media adverts to look at the themes that are most commonly used in marketing strategies to sell vehicles.

Assessment 1: Newspapers and Magazines

The newspapers and magazines reviewed were

Broad sheets	and	Weekend Telegraph
supplementary		Weekend Telegraph Magazine
magazines		Daily Mail
		Mail on Sunday
		'Night and Day' Mail on Sunday Magazine
		The Times
Tabloids		The Sun
		The Sunday People
Lifestyle magazines		Prima

New Woman
Loaded
Maxim
Professional Press 'What Car?' Magazine

Broad sheet newspapers and the weekend supplements

Looking at the newspapers in their entirety, the articles tend to be based on fact and do not rely on titillation to sell stories. The target audience is a generally more educated and aware sector of the population; those who make time at the weekend to catch up with the news and can ponder over the articles and advertisements in the supplements. The adverts in the glossy weekend supplements to these newspapers are plentiful and prominent, for cars as well as other luxury items including jewellery, perfume and designer label clothing. The inside covers of one Telegraph supplement, prime spots for advertising, were adverts for cars. There were a total of nine adverts through out the magazine, seven of them over double pages, equating to nearly every other page. A range of cars are advertised including the Ford Ka and Zetec and the Peugeot 106 at one end of the price spectrum and BMW, Lexus, Jaguar S type and Land Rover Discovery at the other end of the spectrum. However, there were no adverts for typical family cars such as Vauxhall and Ford saloons. The signals from most of the adverts are quality, drive and handling. The prices are given for some of the vehicles but it is not used as the primary selling signal.

The adverts in two 'Night and Day' magazines covered a more broad range of vehicles including the Ford Ka and Focus, Daewoo Matiz, Skoda Fabia, Renault Megane, Alfa Romeo and Mercedes Benz. A wider range of signals were incorporated, and price and finance featured more strongly as primary signals.

The separate Mail on Sunday supplement for women did not carry any adverts for cars in the weeks that were reviewed.

Tabloids

The adverts in the tabloids were for Vauxhall and Ford, the primary signals being about price and affordability. As well containing adverts for cars, the tabloids carried as many adverts for related products such as car insurance and loans to buy a car. There were three adverts for finance companies in the Sun. The adverts for loans were targeted to audiences with County Court Judgements, defaults, mortgage arrears and so on. These adverts were not run in the broad sheets, another indication of the different target markets assumed.

Lifestyle magazines

Prima and New Woman generally have different target audiences. Prima contains sewing and knitting patterns and takes a serious and pragmatic view on the issues raised in its articles. The target audience is generally a little older (mid thirties) and settled in their career ambitions and committed family relationships. New Woman appeals to a generally younger audience (late teens to early 30s), the articles tend to be more trivialised and appeal to the ambitions and insecurities of those trying to assert an independence and break from a traditional family grouping stereotype.

The edition of Prima that I reviewed (Prima, March 2000) carried only one advertisement for a car and that was for the Fiat Multipla (see Figure 1). The vehicle looks awkward and does not follow conventional design lines. The caption reads, 'stand out from the crowd, then offer them a lift.' You would stand out from the crowd, by many peoples standards, this is not an attractive vehicle, it is a vehicle for those perhaps more interested in functionality than looks. The selling features are that it is big enough for six people and their luggage (or perhaps six peoples kids, their school bags and your shopping). Having said that it is spacious, the advert then assures the audience of any fears they may have about its size by saying it is comparable to a small family saloon in dimensions and handling. The magazine also carried an advert for a national chain of repair garages. The caption reads 'for most women, choosing a garage can be quite a tricky business' (assuming that men find it easy?). The advert continues to play on the stereotype that woman are intimidated by garages and do not usually

deal with car maintenance. It is however a recognition of the fact that more woman are now car drivers or owners and thus have more responsibility to maintain the vehicle. Whether the advert reinforces the stereotype or provides a means of breaking it I have yet to decide.



Fig. 1. The Fiat Multipla (reproduced from Prima, March 2000)

New Woman contains more car adverts and adverts in general for items such as perfume, cosmetics and designer clothing. All of the adverts were for smaller cars (Vauxhall Corsa, Toyota Yaris, Ford Ka and Peugeot 106), but were generally selling interior spaciousness and comfort the fact that small cars can be powerful. Vauxhall's advert for the Corsa appeared to perpetuate a common stereotype that women cannot park cars, by showing how easy it is to park the Corsa even in the most impossibly sized spaces.

Loaded and Maxim both cater for the younger male audience (late teens to early 30s). Each of the editions reviewed contained three or four adverts for cars, less than the amount of adverts for clothes, watches and home entertainment equipment. The adverts in Loaded were for three different types of car. Peugeot appeared to be selling speed, depicting the 106GTi being driven over a long bridge, clear of traffic, the white lines in the road behind the car spelling 'Yeeehaaa!' Nissan's advert for the Micra focused upon it being a popular choice of

vehicle with driving instructors because of reinforced wheels, lights and rigid body shell. The advert is a montage of excerpts from the Highway Code, damaged road signs, crumpled street furniture and vehicle design specifications. This appears to appeal to a younger less experienced driver or perhaps it also encourages a more carelessness driving style? The third advert in Loaded was for a limited edition convertible Mazda MX-5. Although vehicle price is listed in two of the adverts, it is not a key selling feature.

The adverts in Maxim promoted speed and power in the Vauxhall Tigra and also speed and power in the advert for the 306GTi showing its six gears in the style of a heart rate monitor screen.

Professional press

'What Car?' Magazine was reviewed because it is an outlet for advertising to a receptive market; those that have already made a conscious decision to start looking for a car and who are interested in finding out more detailed information about certain vehicle features. There were 26 advertisements in the particular edition I reviewed. In general the adverts did not provide any more details about the cars than the adverts carried in other publications and adverts were present that were also carried in other magazines. The only exceptions were two more detailed promotional adverts for Vauxhall and Skoda, each running to 12 sides. Vauxhalls advert entitled 'useful space' contained information about a number of models in the range, focusing on the internal capacity and range of uses of each one, a common theme across most of Vauxhalls advertising during this time period. The advert for Skoda is based upon it being voted 'What Cars?' Car of the Year 2000, using the same theme as in its other adverts, re-launching its self and trying to break the stigma attached to its vehicles.

Assessment 2: Themes and Signals

All of the magazine adverts continue to be included in this assessment, but the television adverts are also reviewed to take an overall view of the strategies employed and the themes used across all media. All of the details recorded about each advert were reviewed and

categorised according to the primary signal I received. Some of the adverts were giving out two equally important signals, in which case both were recorded. There were also some adverts that did not send out any clear and easy to interpret signal. These were classified as 'unidentifiable'. The bar chart in Figure 2 is a summary of the key signals recorded from all of the different adverts.

Related signals such as speed and power (which infers the capability for speed) have been grouped together, as have price and affordability, because prices were quoted as the primary signal were they were considered to be a special price or good value for all the vehicle's attributes.

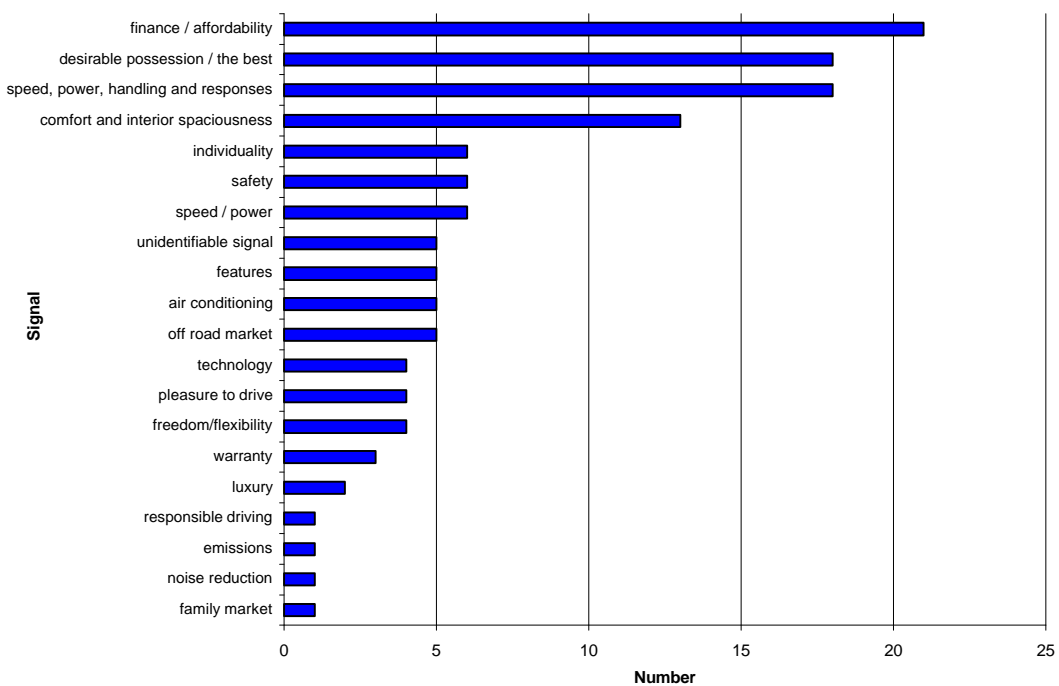


Fig. 2. Summary of Signals from Adverts

Listed below are the themes that are discussed in more detail in this paper because they are the ones that bring the car into the realms of a personal possession and further remove it from that of a mere mode of transport.

- Finance and affordability
- Desirable possession and 'the best'

- Speed, power, handling and responses
- Comfort and space

Finance and affordability It is not difficult to understand why price and payment methods are the most commonly identified signals. A new car is an expensive purchase and one which few people can afford without the support of a means of spreading the payments or receiving additional bonuses such as 0% finance, extended warranty and a years free insurance which make the over all initial outlay less expensive. Some of the adverts appear to be run as a direct result of news early in the year 2000 that cars were being sold at artificially high prices in Britain. Vauxhall and Mitsubishi each ran adverts (recorded in April 2000) that address this issue. Vauxhall ran two similar adverts in newspapers based upon a map of Europe, highlighting Great Britain and a GB sticker. The respective slogans read 'in this part of Europe you can save thousands on a Vauxhall, you don't have to go to Europe' and 'Guess which country in Europe sells with savings of thousands?' Mitsubishi had a full-page advert in the Mail on Sunday newspaper showing a headline that says 'Car firms will be forced to slash prices'. Below this, the advert reads 'Mitsubishi. Ahead of our time again. Cut prices by 15% prior to this.'

Warranty also forms part of the package in a number of instances, but is also a related factor used as a selling feature in its own right for a number of cars. An advert for Peugeot shows one of its vehicles on a safety net. Cars are an expensive purchase and people are likely to feel safer investing in one if it comes with an extended warranty period.

Desirability, quality, treasured possession Along with price, this was the most recorded signal. All cars ultimately perform the same basic function, so the manufacturer needs to sell them by their features that set them apart. The adverts were selling more than a mode of transport, they were selling an image, appealing to our aspirations to be the best and have the best, boasting improved quality of life and jealousy of others who do not have such a vehicle. A good example of this is Fords advert for the Ka. No information is given about the car, but it

reflects a desire to own it. The car and the background are green and the caption reads 'with envy'.

Volkswagen ran a series of adverts for the Passat in magazines and on the television all using the treasured possession theme (January 2001). Each advert has the headline or slogan 'The beautifully crafted new Passat, you'll want to keep it that way' and shows a different scenario where the owner has been very protective of the car to prevent any damage being done to it.

Adverts recorded include:

- A muddy dog being sent home in a taxi home after its walk rather than being allowed back into the car
- An anxious father of a newly qualified driver quizzing the driving test examiner about his sons actual driving skill because he doesn't want his son to drive his car
- A scarecrow next to the car in the drive way to keep birds away

Cars are an expensive purchase and it would make sense to keep damage to a minimum and take care of the vehicle. However, the primary purpose of the car, as a mode of transport is taken out of context. The advert portrays the primary purpose as being a treasured possession, to be admired, but not to be used, like a child who is not allowed to play with a toy for fear of breaking it.

Williamson (Williamson, 1991) theorised that because of the decline in the manufacturing industry, people are being made to identify themselves more by what they consume rather than what they produce.

The most meaningful badge of rank .. is, of course, what car they give you. One day people will probably dispense with confusing terms of rank such as junior executive and will simply define people s status by their cars.

Well son, you'll start off as a Ford Escort, like every young lad, but if you work hard in ten years time you could be a Granada, perhaps even a Jaguar like me.

Ben Elton 1992

Car adverts are a good example of this being encouraged in practice. The travel choice element is often taken from the equation. It is about the material world in which we live and the desire to have nice possessions and to aspire to bigger and better models. And of course, once the decision to purchase a car is made and the benefits of its use are enforced, it becomes the first choice of travel mode more and more often.

A common theme used in the television and paper adverts is the use of attractive, well-dressed people and clear and well-maintained roads. This mirrors the desire for attractiveness and reflects the quality and desirability of the vehicle.

Speed, power, handling and responses Although subtly different, these signals have been grouped together because they some infer each other. For example, why would one need a powerful small car if not for the purpose of achieving speed and why would responses be so important unless driving the vehicle at speed? Peugeot provide good examples of the use of speed, as already discussed with regard to the 106GTi and 306GTi adverts. Jaguars advert for the XJ Sport (Mail on Sunday Magazine 07/01/01) shows the car on a blurred background, and the caption 'next time you are overtaken by an XJ Sport you will find it hard to tell whether it's a luxury or a sports car' image infers the car is moving at speed.

Toyota also ran an advert for the Celica in 'What Car?' Magazines (May 2000) with wording that suggests speed and power are exciting:

What have we let loose? A car with nerve tingling responses that delivers the best power to weight ratio in its class. Beneath its predatory shell lurks our potent new VVTi engine, giving increased

torque through the six speed gear box come to think of it, the only thing that can hinder its responses are yours.

Comfort, space and luxury Vauxhall and Toyota have both been running adverts in the time period of this study that concentrate on the amount of interior space their respective vehicles have, despite the external dimensions not being any larger. Toyota's Yaris 'Defies Logic', with adverts including a similarity drawn with a whale's tail coming out of a bath, inferring that the rest of the whale must be in there somehow. Vauxhall (one of the few companies to use a celebrity) have Griff Ryes Jones as a bit of boffin, examining the extra space in the Vectra's boot, just right for the dog, or unpacking a Corsa from a crate that has been shipped over to the USA where everything is bigger. The list of features of ticked off the list and the crew of men look on in disbelief that this is possible with such a small car. Space is a good feature for practicality as well as comfort, but how much comfort and luxury do we need? Adverts for luxury vehicles and additional on board features seem to be taking the need for home comforts' too far. A recent advert for the Ford Galaxy shows a family with two children in the back seats with their eyes firmly focused on the 'on board' Television screens. Can children really not function properly without television and don't they already get enough of it at home? What happens to their faces when the vehicle has to stop suddenly?

Safety Although safety features were included in many of the adverts as standard, stating that air bags and ABS were fitted to the models as standard, few adverts focused on safety as the primary selling point. Renault Megane uses crash test dummies distinctive yellow and black safety symbols in its adverts, with the caption 'Stay Beautiful' implying that you will stay safe and unhurt in one of its vehicles. The adverts featuring safety, concentrate on the safety of the passengers, which one would expect, but in an incident involving pedestrians or animals it is rarely the passengers that come off worse. One advert that does show safety from the 'victims' point of view, is for the Ford Focus. A human is not used as the victim – it's a moose. Stood in the centre of an icy road, the moose sees the Focus coming towards him, and his life flashes before him as a series of Polaroid photos of his life. But the accident is avoided. The

driver is able to manoeuvre around the animal and continue on his journey. But the accident could also suggest that the man was driving at speed, and rather than braking, is able to continue at the same speed. This infers the ability to drive at speed, using vehicle safety as the justification for not taking more care in anticipating hazards.

Linked to safety is personal security, a commonly expressed reason (especially for women) as to why the car is often the preferred mode of transport in everyday life. Yet none of the adverts reviewed use this signal. If they did, it would certainly not assist in a move away from car travel to other modes of transport.

Reliance on the motor car.

The Passatt adverts provide a good example of the way in which we have become attached to our cars. Toyota also ran adverts for the Corolla, showing a lighthouse keeper, living on an island about 100 metres across driving from the boat to the lighthouse. The caption reads 'It'll be years before Fraser discovers just how economical the new Corolla VVTi engine can really be.'

Some adverts made comparisons with public transport. For example there was an advert on the television for the Toyota Celica, showing the driver of a steam train. He is hot and tired and looking with jealousy at the man driving the car saying "I am a prisoner of this steel tracks." He is longing for a machine that will take him where he wants to go. The primary signal is the freedom a car can offer, but at the same time it infers that train journeys are not flexible.

Most car adverts show roads clear of traffic. However, there are manufacturers who are picking up on the fact that the roads are no longer clear. A number of adverts for smaller cars focus on city driving, manoeuvrability and parking and I also came across an advert that targets the frustration of traffic jams head on. It was a television advert for the Volkswagen Polo. The driver is shown in a tail back miles long, and we can hear his thoughts.... "

*Could this be paradise? Head lights sparkling brake lights winking at me the majestic spilt
load, snow bound tail backs that stir my soul. I pray, let this moment last for ever.*

Who cares about the traffic jam? He is in a warm car with comfy seats and his own choice of music to listen to.

Another television advert for the Volkswagen Golf shows a series of clips of different people and how what they are doing defines them as people. For example a man walking two bull terriers with the caption 'I'm hard', a man wearing lots of gold jewellery driving a speed boat 'I'm loaded'. The last clip is of a man getting into his Volkswagen Golf and the caption reads 'I'm just going down the shops'. Although it is inferring that a car is not a personal statement about your self (which many other adverts do focus on), it does show someone making a short journey by car that he could have perhaps done on foot. Volkswagen also ran an advert for the Bora which I saw in a local newspaper with the caption 'time to start planning some unnecessary journeys.'

Summary

Manufacturers appear to be targeting audiences differently. For example the Times, Telegraph and to a lesser extent, the Mail carried adverts for more expensive, luxury vehicles such as Audi and Lexus. The tabloids contained adverts for more affordable makes and models, such as Ford Mondeos and Vauxhall Vectras complemented by adverts for loans to buy them with. The adverts in women's magazines were tailored to the market by advertising smaller, easier to manoeuvre vehicles. The adverts in the men's magazines were more wide ranging, and speed, or rather the implication of speed was a more commonly used signal. Power was used as a selling feature and speed was inferred by some of the signals, although other vehicles were not involved, portraying inconsiderate or reckless driving.

In terms of the composition of the adverts, there was generally little difference across the different publications, although the Sunday supplements did feature more double page adverts. Each used attractive people, spotless cars and pristine roads or took the car out of the highway context, to present it as a possession rather than as a mode of transport. The adverts do not always communicate essential information about the vehicles ability to perform its basic function, to get you from A to B. This is because cars are generically the same and the average car buyer is not interested in a lot of technical information. Therefore, the vehicle has to be sold on the merits of its other features, the ones that set it apart from the rest, the ones that we use to justify our purchase decisions. This is where the line between a need and a desire becomes blurred. The review has shown that price and affordability are the most common focuses in the marketing strategies, they appeal to our needs for a vehicle that is within our budget. But luxury and individuality play just as big a part in appealing to our desires, the longing to be more comfortable, for people to be jealous of us. The adverts sell us an image of the person we could be, they play on deep rooted stereotypes, manipulating our attitudes towards what we should be wanting for ourselves and thus play on our fears and insecurities.' By providing us with information about price and affordability or additional safety features, we can justify the purchase of a luxury car with lots of additional features that we don't really need. For example, an advert for Land Rover shows it being driven through a flooded village somewhere in the developing world. The caption says 'school bus, tractor, ferry ...'. Ironically, many Land Rovers never see this kind of use and stay on urban roads, but the fact that it *is* versatile and practical can justify the purchase decision. The relatively small market for these heavy duty uses also mean that the vehicles features have to be extended to appeal to a wider audience and this has been done by the use of luxury interiors and often reference to price.

As well as the different adverts, manufacturers have developed 'tag lines' for their make or particular models, and in the short time or on the one page that an advert has to get across its message, the tag line also provides a signal about the car. Some examples are:

- 'the car in front' - is a Toyota

- Toyota Yaris, it defies logic
- Hyundai - 'prepare to want one'
- BMW - 'the ultimate driving machine',
- Vauxhall - 'raising the standards'
- Renault Clio 'size matters'
- Renault Megane 'stay beautiful'
- Peugeot 'the drive of your life'
- Land Rover, 'the best 4 x 4 x far'
- Mazda 'get in, be moved'

adverts for public transport

Whilst reviewing each of the publications for car adverts, I was also looking for articles and adverts for public transport. Three adverts promoting train travel were found. Two were in a local newspaper for South West Trains, advertising special ticket prices to major attractions. The other was in one of the national newspapers for a Young Persons Railcard. This amount of advertising does not support the increasing emphasis being placed on making more information available about public transport services available and improving the quality of services. This is due to the nature of the product and the way in which it operates and can be looked at in a number of ways. Firstly, a car is more than a mode of transport. It is a personal possession that can be tailored to specific desires and needs. Buses and train, obviously, are not. Secondly, bus and rail services are owned by private companies but run as a public service. This is often in partnership with and with the financial support of the local authority, where the service is not commercially viable but provides a benefit to the community. Who then has the responsibility for advertising? Is it the local authority or the bus company? Thirdly, different operators run services in different places which means that a national advertising campaign would not be possible. Any affinity, loyalty or preference that people may have towards a particular make of car, for example because they are British made, will not be mirrored by their attitudes towards a bus company. Any advertising for a particular

company would not only be impractical because of the localised nature of the services it provides, it would also be a general promotion for buses and so could promote bus travel with any company. Advertising tends to be localised and based upon the provision of service information related to the specific needs and attractions. An example of this would be in Eastleigh, Hampshire where leaflets were delivered to the residents telling them about a bus service to the out of town low cost supermarket. The DETR 'are you doing your bit' campaign does embrace transport, with an advert about car sharing to get to work.

What are motor companies doing to address the issue of increased car use?

The signals we are getting from the adverts are generally about the product, not the producer. Is the car industry modifying its corporate position? Based on this review, manufacturers do not choose to use adverts to tell us about what they are doing to reduce their impact upon the environment. In the review, and as shown in Figure 2 only two manufacturers used such signals. Nissan had an advert for the Almera (What Car? May 2000) with noise reduction as its primary signal, but this focused upon noise *inside* the vehicle:

So many class leading noise features – the foam in the roof pillars to reduce vibration – extra body stiffening – and on the underside, Nissan actually applies what's called intelligent paint which expands to a predetermined sound absorbing thickness.

Toyota had an advert for the Corolla (Telegraph Magazine, March 2000) with its two primary signals telling us that it has a powerful engine, yet it produces lower emissions. Looking at the small print of all the adverts, two (both for Toyota) said that the vehicle is economical, but this is also a factor related to price and affordability.

There could be two reasons why manufacturers do not address environmental issues in their adverts. The first is that they are in the business of selling cars and making money. Time and space in adverts is limited and the manufacturer wants to tell you positive things about the vehicle and how *you* will benefit directly from buying it, how much more comfortable you will

be and how good you will look. The second reason is because talking about environmental issues draws attention to negative factors. Any discussion about them means that the manufacturer needs to be careful about what it does and does not say. Emissions, air pollution and noise can be measured and increasing amounts of research are being conducted on direct and indirect effects upon health from emissions and from taking less exercise. Any claims made in the adverts that these factors are improved can be challenged. Claims that a car will boost your standing in society, on the other hand, are not likely to be scrutinised amid claims of false advertising.

Web sites and company reports.

Web sites and company reports are where the manufacturers tell us what they are doing to address some of the issues of increased car use that they choose not to discuss in their adverts. They still want to sell cars, so the emphasis is on technological advances in fuel economy and alternative fuel research to combat environmental pollution and resource depletion. On its web site, the Ford Motor Company states that it

seeks to play an active role in improving understanding of the issue and finding constructive solutions that efficiently meet the needs of society, and land use and transportation policy.

At Ford the emphasis is also on the development of technology to achieve fuel efficiencies. The new Ford Focus features the most fuel efficient line up of engines in company history. The Ford Ka is 30% more fuel efficient than the comparable Fiesta. Neither fact is stated on any of the adverts for these models. An article in the Observer (12/11/00) about William Clay Ford Jr, Henry Fords great grandson, quotes him as saying

what s needed this century is a clean revolution.

He believes that corporations could and should be a major force in this for resolving social and environmental concerns. He is in a position to be a catalyst for change and appears to want to make a difference, saying

I want my children to inherit a legacy that they can be proud of. William Clay Ford Jr 2000.

These appear to be more than hollow promises. Ford is the first and only car manufacturer to certify all 140 of its plants under ISO 14001, the international management standard that audits environmental performance. He has even lobbied for higher petrol taxes and initiated discussions with environmentalists. The company is investing \$1 billion on a family car that will run on hydrogen and emit only water by the year 2004.

Ford is not the only motor manufacturer who is looking at issues associated with motor vehicles and emissions. Manufacturers are now looking more seriously at 'alternative' fuels. The petrol shortage in September 2000, caused by protestors blocking tankers from leaving refineries, made us consider each day how we were going to travel, and what we would do when our petrol ran out. It demonstrated how much every aspect of our daily life relies on the use of fossil fuels, to get to work, deliver groceries to the shops and allow ambulances and fire engines to attend accidents. All the world's major motor manufacturers are now realising that fossil fuels cannot be relied upon. For those who can come up with a formula for new fuels together with convenient methods of refuelling it will mean huge financial gains.

The Cleaner Vehicles Task Force has also been set up by the Government with senior representatives from industry, environmentalists and other organisations to promote the production, purchase and use of vehicles which are more fuel efficient, less polluting and quieter and to improve environmental performance of the existing fleet. It is also a source of advice and education. This represents a technocratic view, but industry is doing what it can within its boundaries. The use of alternatives fuels should be welcomed, but it does not address the other issues that come with increased car use of congestion, lost time, community severance and accidents.

Conclusion of research and assessment of issues for transport professionals

This paper has reviewed a range of adverts and target audiences. The purpose of this was to identify the most commonly used themes and marketing tactics. This provides a basis from which further research could be conducted to investigate whether people's travel choices are actually affected by adverts. Our initial decision to purchase a car is perhaps motivated more by the desire to have nice possessions and freedom. However, adverts could affect people's decisions when it comes to upgrade their car, or reinforce a brand image with them.

The study found that although manufacturers are making headway in developing alternative fuels and minimising effects on the environment, this is not coming through in the adverts. If they did, it may start to place in people's minds that they too should consider their effects on the environment and society and thus how they use their car. The most common themes used in the adverts are the affordability of vehicles, desirability, comfort, responses and handling (closely linked to speed and power). This relates to Williamson's theory. If cars are affordable and desirable, people can fulfil their own desires to have nice possessions to identify who and what they are.

This has implications for transport professionals. How can we promote alternative modes of travel to the car when the car is being advertised all around us? Perhaps this is one area where marketers and transport professionals can work together to conduct more research into the effects of advertising.

Even as a transport planner with a greater awareness of the campaigns being run, I am aware of a distinct lack of publicity for these events in the public domain. They also focus on the environmental concerns associated with car travel. Adverts for cars reinforce the personal benefits of car use, yet campaigns not to use the car are aimed at achieving the 'greater good' – pollution, acid rain and resource depletion. These concepts are still too far removed from everyday perceptions.

The challenge is to advertise public transport, walking and cycling positively and demonstrate the personal benefits, perhaps trying to mirror some of the signals and target audience tactics used in car adverts.

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