Coco Mademoiselle
An Analysis of Chanel Advertising in Cosmopolitan Magazine

Introduction to Journalism and Mass Communications

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Advertisements typically take up around 50 percent of a print magazine’s pages (Sims, 2014). With such a large proportion of a magazine dedicated to advertising, what makes an advertisement actually grab the attention of readers? This analysis will examine the effectiveness of a Chanel advertisement placed in a top tier women’s magazine, Cosmopolitan. In the April 2017 edition of Cosmopolitan, Chanel placed a two-page print advertisement, featuring actress Keira Knightley, for their fragrance “Coco Mademoiselle.” Chanel’s perfume advertisement in Cosmopolitan is one with a successful promise of luxury, classic femininity and timeless elegance. This advertisement’s placement in a popular magazine, simplistic approach to design strategy and psychological impact on consumers undoubtedly prove Chanel’s success in marketing this upscale product.

Firstly, Chanel’s print advertisement for Coco Mademoiselle is successful due to it’s placement in an extremely popular women’s magazine. The demographic profile of Cosmopolitan magazine is mostly comprised of women on a wide age range of 18 to 49—in 2017, Cosmo’s audience included 14,449,000 female readers out of 17,133,00 readers total (Cosmopolitan). More than half of the magazine’s audience are college-educated or currently attending college, and more than half of the total audience is employed (Cosmopolitan). As for Cosmo’s success as a magazine, its media kit asserts its dominance as “the most vital women’s magazine” with a reach of 50,003,000, exceeding competitors such as Glamour, Elle, InStyle, Marie Claire, and Allure (Cosmopolitan). Clearly, Cosmopolitan is at the top of the market for women’s magazines, making it a suitable outlet for Chanel to advertise women’s products in. As an upscale, mature brand that emphasizes women’s products, Chanel wants to target the demographic of Cosmopolitan because their consumer profile aligns well with that of this magazine. The fashion-oriented readers of Cosmopolitan, being primarily adult women, are
likely interested in a tasteful perfume like Coco Mademoiselle. Chanel spent a whopping $553,180 for this two-page print ad in Cosmo’s April 2017 issue—the fashion company clearly saw the worth in spending a pretty penny on an advertisement in a well-established magazine (Cosmopolitan). However, placement in Cosmopolitan is not the sole key to Chanel’s marketing success. Chanel has its own rich history of brand success and consistent dominance in the luxury fashion industry. Founded by Gabrielle Chanel in early 20th century France, the company has upheld its reputation of simple, elegant style for more than 100 years (Inside). After opening her first store in Paris in 1910, Chanel’s line created a sensation in Europe and her company continued to flourish—leading to the opening of more stores, couture houses and expansion to the the United States (Inside). Chanel’s first fragrance appeared in 1921 with the release of Chanel No. 5, and countless successful fragrance lines followed its legacy in later years, accompanied by many other product lines (Inside). Similar to other iconic brands, Chanel’s consistent commitment to its core values and strong heritage has given the company most of its marketing prosperity. A comparable case is the whiskey brand Jack Daniels, which has found its ultimate marketing success by staying true to its iconic roots of masculine frontier life (Holt, 2006). Like Jack Daniels, Chanel is rooted in its own history, continuing to uphold the legacy of its founder, Mademoiselle Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel, whom this advertised fragrance is named after. Because Chanel and Cosmopolitan have found great success as leading brands in their respective markets, the placement of this advertisement couldn’t be more fitting.

As for the design of the advertisement, Chanel employed creative visual techniques and principles that effectively separated their advertisement from others in this issue of Cosmopolitan. The glamorous, focused image of Keira Knightley, a celebrity icon, catches the reader’s eye immediately—she is clad in Chanel clothing, seductively holding a Chanel key
chain up to her lips. Chanel has a long, successful history of celebrity endorsement since the company’s founding, outfitting many iconic women throughout the years, such as Jackie Kennedy, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly (Inside). This incorporation of celebrity figures in Chanel’s marketing demonstrates the persuasion principle of authority—if a famous woman with a fashionable reputation is representing the brand, consumers trust that the product is worth buying (Rojas, 2017). Thus, it is no surprise seeing Keira Knightley as the face of Coco Mademoiselle. In addition to the incorporation of Knightley, Chanel’s design techniques assure its effectiveness. The visual structure of the advertisement employs the technique of focal point—bringing attention to one object through the use of the Gutenberg Diagonal, which exploits the reader’s natural pattern of vision down the page of an advertisement (Wells, 2017). In this case, that focal point is the Coco Mademoiselle perfume bottle on the first page of the advertisement, placed prominently in the bottom right corner. In addition to focal point, this Chanel ad used the color technique of dark space to give the effect of contrast and object focus (Wells, 2017). This technique is seen on both pages of the advertisement: Keira Knightley is surrounded by a dark background on the first page, and the image of the perfume bottle is completely surrounded by black on the second page. Aside from this dark space technique, the colorful components of the advertisement also complement each other; Keira Knightley and the perfume bottle share a similar color scheme of neutrals, pinks, and hints of metallic, giving both images a warm glow. This color balance exhibits good consistency between both pages of the advertisement (Wells, 2017). With the use of these deliberate techniques, the graphical construction of this ad was well executed, easily catching any reader’s eye.

In addition to visual structure, Chanel’s unorthodox approach to text in this advertisement plays off of the brand’s character perfectly—something other ads lack in this magazine. There is
no use of a slogan or any sort of phrase; the only words present are the iconic Chanel logo and the name of the perfume, “Coco Mademoiselle,” in a handwritten fashion. This minimalist approach to words makes Chanel’s ad stand out from others, focusing the advertisement on the aesthetic of the product and the implications that the Chanel brand has to offer: luxury, sophistication, and timeless elegance. Anyone who sees the name “Chanel” with its signature font knows that whatever product being sold is nothing but high quality. This simple approach to advertising also reflects Chanel’s overall philosophy of “less is more” as a fashion line, allowing customers to have the simplicity of everyday use, while maintaining the immense luxury that this company provides (Yurtbay, 2014). To give consumers a taste of that luxury, this advertisement also includes a real perfume sample of Coco Mademoiselle, folded over on the second page. This offers consumers the opportunity to experience the fragrance themselves and adds to the authenticity of the product. The use of minimal words, prestige of Chanel’s classic font, and presence of a sample in this advertisement perfectly conveys Chanel’s message that this perfume is the real deal—nothing but authentic, unmatched luxury.

Chanel’s advertisement of Coco Mademoiselle reaches their marketing goal: tapping into consumers’ psyche, asserting their dominance as a high-end brand, and ultimately, selling their product. Their target marketing strategy appeals to the psychographics of readers, catering to their audience’s wants and desires (Wells, 2017). With Keira Knightley as the face of the product and the wide perception of Chanel as a luxury brand, this advertisement appeals to the common desire for an upscale, sophisticated lifestyle. In particular, Chanel executes the effects on cognition, affect and behavior in their audience. The goal of cognitive effect is to create associations between the product and other powerful mechanisms, such as emotion and way of life (Wells, 2017). For Chanel, that cognitive goal is to reinforce audience members’ original
beliefs about their brand: the perception of Chanel as a guaranteed path to luxury. Aside from this promise of an upscale style, this ad tugs at readers’ emotions—if you purchase Coco Mademoiselle, you can take on the confident, womanly character that the fragrance offers: sensual, classy and chic… you, too, can be just like Keira Knightley. This persona stems from Chanel’s long-term use of a sharp gender binary in its marketing (Yurtbay, 2014). Over the years, Chanel has maintained the idea of the “feminine” versus the “masculine,” allowing the company to cater to a very large audience (Yurtbay, 2014). In this case, Chanel is appealing to consumers who seek femininity, which works well with the female-dominated audience of Cosmopolitan. Next, this advertisement executes affective impact—shaping attitudes toward a brand (Wells, 2017). This isn’t difficult for Chanel with its elegant, sophisticated reputation that it has constantly upheld since its founding. Lastly, the goal of behavioral effect is to expand sales and reinforce brand loyalty (Wells, 2017). This Chanel advertisement achieves both of these functions, especially the reinforcement of brand loyalty as a fragrance ad. Perfume is less frequently purchased and expensive in nature, making Coco Mademoiselle a high involvement product (Wells, 2017). Because consumers often stick with the same fragrance for long periods of time, and this product requires more purchase commitment, Chanel reaches out to their brand loyalists by advertising Coco Mademoiselle. Chanel’s globally esteemed status and psychological impact on consumers make it possible for this advertisement to have such a lucrative reach.

Due to Chanel’s iconic reputation, pairing with a leading magazine, design techniques, and marketing strategies, it is clear that this print advertisement successfully performed its intended function. Chanel effectively communicated Coco Mademoiselle as not just a beautiful fragrance, but, rather, the sophisticated, elegant lifestyle that Chanel has represented for over a
century. Although Mademoiselle “Coco” Chanel has passed, this advertisement is a reminder that her legacy lives on today and will persist for years to come.
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