

Advertising and Consumer Citizenship will be essential reading for all those interested in the study of consumption, citizenship and gender. Excerpt In studies of consumerism it has become almost a truism to claim that the purchase, use and display of goods in some way expresses social identities.

There has also been a strong, steady stream of critical research, mainly but not exclusively feminist, which has highlighted and explored the linking of women with the realm of consumption. Western conceptions of citizenship have also come under feminist scrutiny, as scholars have shown that apparent gender neutrality associated with citizenship masks gender specificity and precipitates consequent inequalities. This book demonstrates that, far from being outmoded or irrelevant, gender questions continue to be crucial in the study of contemporary culture and capitalism. In this study, this involves asking where and how gender emerges as a significant organising principle in the contemporary advertising world. Advertising and Consumer Citizenship exemplifies the kind of detailed, theoretically informed studies which are required to understand the complex production and reproduction of gendered selves today. This volume is also indicative of our commitment to produce a series which will offer critical feminist perspectives on transformations in many realms. This volume provides an analysis of the evolving forms of contemporary capitalism "as manifested in advertising, together with a critical feminist perspective on the transformations of scholarly understanding of this field. Cronin warns that, nevertheless, advertising continues to be a profoundly gendered domain. This is a salutary warning for the Transformations series and its readers: Celia Lury and Bev Skeggs were a continual source of inspiration and encouragement and also coffee and cakes. Sara Ahmed and Mike Featherstone have given me very useful comments and have helped frame my ideas into the form of a book. Thanks to Becky Passmore for hunting down an image for me. Thanks also to my mum, Noreen. I would also like to thank the following companies for granting permission to reproduce their advertisements: Chapter 4 has been published previously in a slightly different form: I would like to thank Space and Culture "the Journal for permitting me to reproduce the article here. Introduction In studies of consumerism it has become almost a truism to claim that the purchase, use and display of goods in some way expresses social identities. Such acts of consumption are imagined as symbolic work in the reflexive project of the self, communicating to others messages of identity, belonging and distinction. The parallel claim that advertising is the prime mediator of these meanings has also gained axiomatic status. This conceptual framework has set up a familiar problematic; we apply individual agency by using the meanings in advertising as symbolic resources in the processes of the construction and communication of our identities. Simultaneously, advertising manipulates us and bends our individual agency to its own commercial ends. This conceptual framework has recently attracted considerable critical attention e. Campbell , ; Falk and Campbell Indeed, I would argue that the model assumes a preconstituted, core subject "however amenable to modification" which takes on the consumerist project of the self. What if the meanings in advertising are not purely directed towards the expression or communication of identities? How should we then consider advertising images and their role in the construction and communication of identities? These are some of the questions which have inspired this book and have opened up new connections between the cultural and the political, the visual and the material, advertising and belonging, consumerism and the rights of citizenship. Of course, innovation and the production of the new are intrinsic to consumerism and tend to structure the conceptual field of the study of consumerism. It is often suggested that in the West we live in a culture of innovation in which ideas, identities, pleasures, goods and images have a short shelf-life. Planned obsolescence presides over cultural life "advertising pushes relentlessly onward, making the new appear outdated in no time. The advertising industry appears to manufacture or recycle the 2 Advertising and consumer citizenship new "innovation and consumerism merge conceptually and appear to form a co-extensive terrain of novelty, possession and capitalist exchange. In this dynamic, consumerism and advertising are often posited as emblematic of cultural change. Yet the research I outline in this book points to complex and contradictory relations between time, innovation and advertising. Alongside its status as epitome of cultural change, consumer culture has also been

figured and denigrated as a feminine domain inscribed with inertia and passivity Bowlby ; Felski ; Radner In many contemporary accounts, the consumerist desire for the new has been conceptualised as a gendered structuring of longing, will and selfcontrol Bowlby Indeed, women are often imagined to be particularly susceptible to seduction by advertising images Nava In effect, whilst gender is constantly invoked to represent consumerism, gender as an organising principle remains undertheorised within mainstream studies of consumption. However, the study of advertising outlined in this book indicates that cultural innovation and gender operate in complex ways; gendered cultural shifts cannot be read off from consumer culture in an unproblematic way. In the results of my study, I found innovation to be strongly associated with male-targeted advertisements, producing particular forms of textual address aimed at male consumers. So, whilst gender is a central organising principle of consumer culture, innovation and advertising, the relationship between gender and consumerism is neither transparent nor immutable. This book explores these paradoxes of time, gender and advertising in the visual realm of consumer culture and expands this conceptual framework to consider consumer-citizenship and European belonging. Don Slater remarks on the tendency to rediscover consumer culture as a site of study every few decades and repackage it as a new academic product. This promotional remarketing of ideas is perhaps unsurprising in the context of the shifting markets for academic texts and the pressures to publish. This summons up rather unflattering images of academics running to catch up with innovations in advertising in order to brand them with conceptual innovations of their own. The cultural takes on a new, intensified significance in which forms of self-reflexivity are brought to the fore. This culture of the image is a culture of heterogeneity, plurality and fracture which emphasises the role of the imagination. Such an emphasis may tend to overestimate the destabilising and emancipating effects on identities and blur the focus on the enduring nature of inequalities McNay It is this dynamic relation of the cultural and aesthetic to the political which has inspired this study and which has encouraged my focus on the articulation between advertising and citizenship. This may seem an uneasy juxtaposition, yet it is one which promises to expand the conceptual horizon of studies of advertising and consumerism. Kevin Robins argues that such studies have tended to focus too narrowly, largely confining their analysis to meaning, identity, distinction and pleasure. Debates about the consumer-citizen have until recently been played out in theories of the mediated public sphere rather than in consumption studies. For example, access to media images has been seen as crucial to imagining and contesting national identities, which in turn comes to be framed as a citizenship right Murdoch Yet the nature of the relation between images, rights and contested belongings remains under-theorised and it is this challenge which has inspired this book. In this book I explore the concept of the consumer-citizen with an emphasis on visibility, gender, cultural difference and advertising. How might an intensification of the role of the cultural and the aesthetic within society articulate with the political discourses of citizenship? How can citizenship rights be accessed and deployed by individuals? What forms of individual freedom are we talking about here? How emotionally charged within everyday 4 Advertising and consumer citizenship life is the right to vote? This book explores the relationship between citizenship and the everyday world of consuming goods and images and examines the relation between citizenship rights and consumer rights. It has frequently been noted that individual freedoms and rights in Western societies have been framed as consumer choices and consumer rights e. Bauman ; Lee ; Wernick If such exclusions operate in the discourses and practices of citizenship, in what ways might the articulation of consumerism alter these terms of exclusion? Indeed, it has been argued that consumerism paradoxically offers women the opportunity to act in consuming goods and images whilst framing these actions in terms which deny any specificity of female identity Radner The relation between definitions of culture and rights of belonging has a long pedigree. Citizenship within Europe has historically involved a culturally mediated and complex relation between definitions of nationality and the attribution of citizenship rights Soysal In effect, diffuse and contested ideas of cultural belonging and ethnicity have been highly influential in decisions about the conferral or denial of citizenship status and rights ibid. Flexible flows of goods, people, finance and images are replacing conventional bilateral exchanges between Western nation-states Appadurai Indeed, the significance of national boundaries within Europe is being altered in the face of growing transnational co-operation and debate in organisations like the UN, NATO and the EU Soysal Introduction 5 For example, the Maastricht Treaty, which was ratified in , provides a

multilevel structure of citizenship and in effect opens up questions of belonging and entitlement in new ways *ibid.* This fluidity across traditional borders brings into question the very nature of those boundaries and spatialises them in new ways Featherstone This aestheticisation of everyday life and the intensification of the influence and range of media networks provides a potential new context for the contestation of national and transnational identities. What might a consideration of consumerism bring to these debates about belonging and citizenship rights? Indeed, interest in consumer-citizenship has been gathering pace, with work such as that of Gabriel and Lang broadening studies of the consumer to areas such as education, citizenship, and environmental activism. This is a timely focus on consumer acts which are interpreted through a broad range of emergent discourses. Yet less attention has been granted to the relation between advertising and citizenship. Studies have tended to emphasise how advertising is a ubiquitous and powerful contemporary set of discourses which mediate the practices of consumption Leiss et al. In an account which is typical of much of the literature on advertising, Leiss et al. Advertising is seen as appropriating symbols for its own commercial ends, reconfiguring the very terms of communication between people; its unsurpassed communicative powers recycle cultural models and references back through the networks of social interactions. This venture is unified by the discourse through and about objects, which bonds together images of persons, products and well-being. Individuals are imagined to construct their identities in an ongoing practice or project. Within this project, advertising is thought to play a key role as mediator of meanings. Yet the specific relationship between the interpretation of visual advertising and consumerism is not fully developed in the literature. To bridge this gap, I will focus on the role of the imagination in processes of vision. Arjun Appadurai suggests that the imagination has long held a crucial role in society, but 6 Advertising and consumer citizenship recent cultural shifts have altered its significance in the everyday world. For Appadurai, the imagination is not a matter of individual psychology but, rather, a social practice. My concern in this book is to explore what this expanded role of the imagination may mean for the relationship between consumerism, advertising and citizenship. Focusing on the visual in advertising, I examine the shifting relations between political and cultural representation: To tackle this range of areas and approaches I have employed what Linda Alcoff Women have been imagined as the epitome of consumer ideals, the prototypical consumer, the active subject who is newly empowered in the public realm of consumer culture. Yet women have also been imagined as passive victims, cultural dupes, pseudo-subjects who are the epitome of the alienation and objectification inherent in consumer capitalism Bowlby, ; Felski ; Nava ; Radner The contractual relations which structure society such as the marriage, the employment and the citizenship contracts require that excluded groups participate in certain contracts. Yet, paradoxically, they posit that these groups do not have the capacities required in order to initiate that participation. I relate these paradoxes to contemporary politics of identity. Here, a politics of national identity functions through the idea that all national cultures are equally different and differently equal. Yet are there nations which operate under subordinated terms? Using the concept of performativity, I explore the contradictions in contractual relations, citizenship and choice, focusing particularly on time and identities on an individual and national level. Yet neatly segmented markets do not exist as social facts to be discovered and manipulated by advertising agencies. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methods and the findings of my study of British and French print advertisements sampled between and Here I outline why I selected print advertising in French and British popular magazines as the site of my analysis.

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