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Is It Sexy?

A Semiotic Analysis of Sexual Imagery in Japanese and United States Advertising

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## Is It Sexy?

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#### **Abstract**

This study presents a semiotic analysis of several magazine advertisements in an attempt to explore body image and sexuality as it is illustrated in marketing campaigns in both the United States and Japan. Each of the magazines from which the artifacts were drawn was published in 2011, and each presents a similar focus on fitness, fashion, and television in each country. A comparison of the sexuality portrayed in advertisements was conducted to explore similarities and differences. It was found that there is a difference in how sexual imagery was used between the United States and Japan, with the United States focusing on experience and passion while Japan focuses more on innocence and youth.

**Keywords: Japan, United States, Advertisements, Magazine, Sexuality, Body Image, Semiotic Analysis**

## Introduction

In the United States, sexuality in advertisements is nothing new. In fact, it seems to have become a normality, something that is of no concern to the average citizen. Sex is portrayed nearly everywhere. Billboards line the highway with underwear-clad female models showing their affinity for animal hide rugs and distaste for clothing or male models of the same pedigree who seem to have a much easier time going about their physical workday without those cumbersome pants that are so casually slung over their shoulders. In magazines it is certainly not a rarity to find a photographic preamble of an article featuring an attractive scantily clad woman urging the reader to investigate the article. We see these things on a daily basis without so much as a second thought. Sex has become just another part of the scenery.

The examples described above are all found in the United States; this level of sexuality in advertising is certainly not found everywhere. Japan, for example, seems to lack such an aversion to clothing. The billboards found in Japan might feature an attractive model, but these models are far less likely to cover themselves with a well-placed vase or a conveniently positioned lock of hair. Rather, they seem to wear clothes. Without giving it much thought, this fact might go unnoticed by the busy commuter's eye as she hurries to catch her train.

This study focuses on a series of advertisements and photos collected from several United States and Japanese magazines with similar content. This selection strategy ensures that the advertisements are of a similar nature and are acceptable comparisons. Within the advertisements and photos, sexuality as illustrated through body image will

the main focus of research. Sexuality as it is portrayed through innuendo within the advertisements will also be explored

In terms of significance, it is important to examine not only the media's effect on society but also to study the culture's influences on the media. This will produce a better understanding of the communication that takes place within the channels of entertainment and advertising. This project will investigate sexual imagery in a variety of advertisements and determine any commonalities in the United States product marketing industry. This project also analyzes the Japanese product marketing practices to ascertain if the Japanese practices are at all similar to those in the United States in terms of employing sexuality as a marketing tool. It is well known that the Japanese culture is more conservative than the United States when it comes to the topic of sex, so it will be interesting to see if the Japanese employ innuendo, or perhaps overt sexuality, in an attempt to sell products.

This search for sexuality in advertising is a worthwhile investment for a variety of reasons. First, the Japanese language has been extensively studied by a variety of scholars. The interactions of the people and the cultural practices of speech are well known. Advertising and signs in Japan are also well studied. Patricia Wetzel studied the language used in informational signs to determine how they appeal to the target audience. The language used in signs and the language used in product marketing are often similar. However, the use of sexuality in advertisements within Japan is a topic that has gone uninvestigated for far too long. It will be interesting to examine the sexuality when it is being marketed to the individual in the United States versus the honorable collective in Japan.

### Review of Literature

Before delving too far into sexuality in advertising, it is important to first explore what it is that makes an advertisement successful, regardless of sexual imagery. In his book titled, *Professional Advertising Photography*, Dave Saunders, compiled a collection of short articles by famous photographers and copywriters who addressed the issue of what makes a successful advertisement. One common theme was that the photo must not only feature the product, but it must also be a legitimately interesting photograph. Along with the interest must come quality and also originality. James Wedge illustrated this nicely by commenting on a camera ad, saying, “I wanted the overall picture itself to be the prominent feature, and the camera secondary” (26). This suggests that an advertisement should always be a quality photograph first and an effective marketing tool second.

Jumping on the bandwagon is another practice that tends to play an important part in advertising. The bandwagon is a common term used in the advertising business, which means the advertiser employs tactics that are very safe or a tactic that another advertiser is using in order to appear similar to the other product or publication. While originality is undoubtedly important, this is not to say that one cannot take the advertisement too far in terms of ingenuity. An advertisement should be fresh, but also familiar. This easily explains the existence of product mascots, which are commonly used to create a sense of connection between a character and a product in order to help people remember a particular product when shopping (Alstiel and Grow 23-25). Finding a familiar theme also leads to what one might call a classic campaign or a viral campaign. A “Classic/Viral

Campaign” is a series of advertisements that all hold a common theme and that are easily associated with other advertisements of the same product. While not a United States product, this classic campaign approach was seen in 1965 with the Benson & Hedges cigarette advertising in Europe (Saunders 50-63). During this time, Benson & Hedges cigarettes associated their product with many world famous locations, such as the Great Pyramids or Stonehenge. A more recent viral campaign might be the Old Spice campaign or the Carl’s Jr. campaign, both of which rely heavily on sex appeal.

With these important aspects of product marketing in mind, it is appropriate to move into the evolution of sex as portrayed in advertisements. This evolution started ages ago, most notably with the printing press (Sarracino and Scott 6) The trend has grown with each technical media advance, from television through the Internet. Each new technology made pornography and other things of a sexual nature more accessible, and thereby, more acceptable in the public eye. Naturally, each stage held some taboo subjects, but the growing acceptance of visual sexuality is undeniable. Prior to the 1920s, the United States saw a habit of exploiting beautiful women in advertising, but a significant swell in this trend came in the mid-20s with Woodburry’s facial soap (Reichert and Lambiase 44-46). This product was marketed specifically to women with its visuals and word choice, but it was also very persistent in marketing sex appeal to women. This campaign suggested love was for the beautiful, and without Woodburry’s, how could one hope to be beautiful? Thereafter, other products followed suit, insisting beautiful people used their product, and it was *because* the consumer used their product that they were beautiful.

This evolution of sexuality can be seen in more recent times as well. An example comes from the late 1990s on the cover of *Esquire* magazines. The December issue of 1998 shows a very stoic Bill Murray in a festive Santa cap and a black suit, portraying virtually no sexuality. However, within a matter of months the cover features a voluptuous blonde in process of removing her clothes, a very different image (Reichert and Lambiase 68-71). The authors of *Sex in Consumer Culture* make a comparison between this new cover and what one might commonly find on the cover of a men's magazine such as *Maxim*. This is an example of how erotic themes in the United States have made their way into the mainstream media. The fact that a stoic, sexless Bill Murray can occupy the same space as a disrobing blonde suggests that sexual imagery has become commonplace, simply a part of our daily commute.

Other studies have looked at sexuality in advertising in a variety of ways, including innuendo and overt sexuality (Waddell 2; Sarracino and Scott 120-123). The articles usually picked one of those subjects and explored it in greater detail. Through looking at these, several differing opinions as to what the sexuality means for our culture have been found. For example, Cortese provided several good examples of how the same product might be marketed differently in various countries, according to local taboos and stigmas. Givenchy Hot Couture, a French fragrance, for example, was marketed to both the United States and Europe with very similar advertisements. The only true difference is that in the European version of the advertisement a woman's nipple was exposed, whereas it was hidden in the U.S. version (78-79). However, no example for a Japanese advertisement was provided.



Japanese advertisers take a different approach to advertising. One very notable difference in marketing practices is the use of celebrities. Japanese advertising is distinguished by its use of celebrities. One estimate states that roughly 70% percent of Japanese advertising makes use of at least one celebrity, either Japanese or foreign (Mooney 25). The use of foreigners is also another notable feature of Japanese marketing. Whether the foreigners are famous, or not, the use of a foreigner is to suggest the product has some kind of worldly appeal (25). Japanese culture also seems to have many more social constraints than the United States. This is to say that the speech patterns used in Japan are very indirect, in order to not rock the boat of social harmony (Inoue 25-26). This indirectness can also be found in its advertising. In a chapter in *Advertising in Asia*, Osamu Inoue suggests a possible reason for such modest advertising. Until the 1980s, Japanese advertising was very strictly regulated to protect the public from any obscenity (30). After the deregulation change came slowly, again, to avoid rocking the boat. Inoue suggests that Japanese advertising is incredibly indirect, avoiding bold statements or anything controversial. This parallels the Japanese speech patterns.

On a similar note Patricia Wetzel analyzes how Japanese warning and informational signs cater to the audience. In her article, *It's Not About You: Deictic Elements in Public Signs of the United States and Japan*, Wetzel found that in Japan the audience is rarely addressed as you. Rather, honorable mentions to the collective are used (Wetzel, 310-317). These findings suggest that Japanese advertisements will be similar. Informational signs and advertisements are very alike. The main difference between the two is only that one wishes to persuade an individual to buy a product. In the United States, both advertisements and informational signs make ready use of the "You" or

another parallel word, in an attempt to entice the individual (311-314). It is likely then, that Japanese advertisements and articles will use words that appeal to the collective, not the individual, much like their warning and informational signs. However, this is not expressly stated, leaving the area unexplored and in need of investigation.

The sources gathered have provided a great deal of information about the United State's method of advertising, and its generous use of sex in order to appeal to its audience. Likewise, a glance at Japanese marketing practices has proven helpful, even if the subject of sexuality is never discussed in the sources. What this suggests is that sex is extremely downplayed in Japanese advertising.

### **Method**

Semiotics, a theory that focuses on the process of significance or meaning making, provides an analytical framework for this study. Ferdinand de Saussure initiated one of the earliest discussions of semiotics or the study of signs. He defined semiotics as "a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life (16)." He continues noting that semiotics "would investigate the nature of signs and laws governing them" (16) Semiotic analysis takes into account socially constructed signs, such as images, colors, emblems, words, or atmosphere, and finds the meaning within those symbols. This approach also ventures into the realm of finding the cultural guidelines that dictate how the signs are used and what they may and may not be used to symbolize. Signs, whether verbal or nonverbal, are the basis for daily communication, even though individuals may not recognize them or explore the depth of meaning they create.

Signs never have a single meaning. The time and place in which a symbol is presented can change that meaning and what it conveys (Chandler, sec. Introduction).

These varied meanings may appear within a single culture. In cross-cultural contexts, a specific sign may signify comparable ideas, or very different ones. Jonathan Schoeder argues that:

Semiotics makes us aware that the cultural values with which we make sense of the world are a tissue of conventions that have been handed down from generation to generation by the members of the culture of which we are a part. It reminds us that there is nothing 'natural' about our values; they are social constructs that not only vary enormously in the course of time but differ radically from culture to culture. (Schroeder 225)

Semiotics analysis uncovers cultural codes, making cultural values evident and examinable. In addition, signs are not neutral (Chandler, sec. Signs). Instead, each use of a sign attempts to convey an ideological viewpoint through that meaning. Signs that convey persuasive messages try to encourage the audience to buy, do, or think something in a particular way.

There are several steps to be taken when approaching a subject through the lenses of semiotic analysis. First, the researcher must identify the artifact. In the context of the research presented here, the artifacts are the individual advertisements. The researcher must find similar advertisements from each culture in order to accurately compare the two. Without doing so the researcher risks inaccurate observations, or biased interpretations regarding the meanings portrayed in each (Chandler, sec. Signs).

The second step involves isolating the sign. In order to achieve this step the researcher must be careful to examine the ad presented to find significant symbols that can be dissected. Some generic examples include a religious item or the use of a specific

color. The researcher needs to have a keen eye in picking out the symbols that are relevant to his or her research, lest the result become convoluted in an obscure mass of observations. (Chandler, sec. Criticisms of Semiotic Analysis)

The third step includes identifying themes within the narrative. This is to ask and explore what the overall tone of the ad is (Chandler, sec. Encoding). Are the marketers using conflicting signs? If so, what kind of meaning does that theme portray or which is more important? The researcher can also look to find how these symbols compliment one another and which ones are featured more in the limelight, versus those which are very subtle and may go unnoticed at first glance. (Chandler)

Exploring the medium on which the artifact is presented is another important aspect of a proper semiotic analysis. For example, is it a poster or a newspaper ad? Was the ad found on a billboard or on the side of a building? How does this medium affect the ad's meaning in terms of credibility of strength in portrayal or the details included? The researcher must also pay close attention to the cultural meaning of each sign presented in this medium. This specific analysis deals with two differing cultures, as the analysis consider each symbol within the mindset of a particular culture. Otherwise, the observations presented become contaminated by outside influences (Chandler, sec. Modes)

Author Mădălina Manolache uses a semiotic analysis approach for exploring advertisements addressing the pay difference between men and women in Europe. To do this, she looked at posters by <http://ec.europa.eu/equalpay>, which attempted to persuade their audience that they should stand in support of the social change they are presenting: equal pay for both sexes (Manolache 81). One advertisement showed a man and a

woman, and another presented two infants of indiscriminant sex, though it is assumed that one is male while the other is female. Next, Manolache dissected the signs to explore the meanings independent of the other advertisement. How were the faces lined up? How much space was left between them? Then she brought the images together to see how they compared to one another. This approach looked at nonverbal signs as they were presented in this context.

Chris Arning takes the semiotic analysis approach in his study of the advertising of Diesel clothing. His method was derived from Peirce, in what he describes as a “Toolbox approach” (14). To find the meaning in Diesel advertising Arning looked at contrasting signs within the same image and made heavy use of “irony” throughout the research. Sexuality was of high concern within the article, and much time was spent discussing heteronormativity. The signs were looked at in relation to one another in order to decipher what the marketers wanted to convey within their advertising.

Staying true to the theme of semiotics in advertising, the study title “Myth and Photography in Advertising: A Semiotic Analysis” looks at advertising in Kohler’s “As I See It” campaign. In this article Janis Page explores the meaning behind the surreal images found in the ads in an attempt to find the meaning in them. This focused on finding sexuality, in form of innuendo, double entendre, or symbols of that nature in the campaign. Model choices, environment, and artifacts were all of chief concern in Page’s study.

Semiotic analysis provides a pertinent theoretical approach for researching and comparing the use of sexuality and body image within advertising in Japan and the United States. Its flexibility allows for a cross-cultural analysis while at the same time

allowing the researcher to remain unbiased. In addition, scholars frequently use semiotics when studying advertisements found in movie posters and television commercials because they are ripe with symbolism (Richards 2). Magazine print ads also provide fertile ground for semiotic analysis. The method allows the researcher to dissect the visual text to determine the meaning of symbolism, color choices, body positions, innuendo, and artifacts found in the advertising images. Given the cultural coding possible in a semiotic analysis approach, this method will illuminate the persuasive messages in both the United States and Japanese texts and generate information for comparing the approach to sexuality and body image in each culture.

### **Analysis**

To explore color choices and symbolism used in advertising three specific advertisements were examined. Ads for beauty products provide a wealth of material in the area of color choices and symbolism. Two of the advertisements found in *People*, and *Elle* are for well-known products in the United States, L'Oreal mascara and Maybelline lipstick, respectively. The advertisement from the Japanese magazine, known as *Mini*, is for a French brand not well known in the United States, Maquillage lipstick. Regarding color choices, there is significant difference between the Japanese and United States advertisements.

Within the U.S. advertisements a person's eyes are immediately drawn to the bold, and dramatic color choices. L'Oreal's Mascara advertisement makes great use of the color black, which stands out greatly when compared to the rest of the image, which features the model and singer Gwen Stefani's pale skin and hair. In this advertisement attention is understandably drawn to the eyes of the model. Her pale skin acts as a blank

canvas from which her bold black-lined eyes can jump. This is made much more apparent when her clothing comes into focus. For example, she is wearing a black blouse, which ruffles around her neck (*People* 0-1).

Maybelline's lipstick advertisement follows a pattern similar to L'Oreal in its bold choice of color; this time however the color is an incredibly vibrant red. Black also plays a role in this advertisement, but as a backdrop for the rest of the image, not the main focus. The model's face is, again, pale, to bring added attention to the lips, which have the red lipstick applied to them, rather than her eyes which are diverted downward away from the camera. Below the model's face is a red rose, which is half flower and half a lipstick tube fashioned into a flower. To the left is yet another tube of lipstick, fully extended to further show the color (*Elle* 103).

The advertisement in *Mini*, for Maquillage's lipstick uses pastel colors, which is a stark contrast to the bold choices found in its U.S. counterparts. The background is a soft white, with the, once again, pale model posed in the foreground. She is wearing a soft pink blouse tied at the shoulder, which is nearly the same color as the lipstick she is wearing. The lettering that reads "Furururun Urururun" also appears in various shades of pinks with soft oranges and beiges to match (Maquillagei 48-49).

To fully understand the significance of the color choices in these advertisements one must also understand the symbolism that accompanies each color in relation to the culture that uses them. Black, in the United States, is often associated with "death" or "coldness" but in the context described above it takes on the meaning of "mystery" and "sexuality" (Rorer). The mysterious often takes on sexual undertones, as members of the United States culture often vies for what they cannot obtain or understand. Therefore, if a

person cannot understand a person, due to the mystery surrounding them, it is implied that they are desirable. The color red is another color that carries a lot of sexuality in its meaning. When thinking of red the typical United States citizen is likely to suggest lustful ideas, pertaining to the color's association with concepts such as Desire, Heat, or Passion, all words that carry even more sexual undertones (Rorer). The use of pink in the Maquillage advertisement is more symbolic of innocence than anything else. This is because in Japan the color pink is representative of childhood or youth. This notion gives this specific advertisement an innocent approach to beauty, rather than the sexy and mysterious approach found in the U.S. ads.

Artifacts also play an important role in portraying sexuality. In two health based magazines, *Men's Health* and *Tarzan*, found in the U.S. and Japan respectively, there are two articles that promote a specific exercise routine. The lack of articles in these specific examples portrays the sexuality in the ads. In the U.S. advertisement a man is seen doing push-ups on a sidewalk wearing no shirt (*Men's Health* 64). In the Japanese one, however, the man is fully clothed in all of his exercises (*Tarzan* 32-33). This small difference in clothing may show that the United States culture is more comfortable with the display of the human body as a whole. This is not to say that shirtless men are absent from *Tarzan*, instead they are used noticeably less often.

A lack of artifacts can also be found in shoe advertisements within the United States. An advertisement for Zappos.com shows a woman, wearing nothing but her shoes waving down a taxi on a busy street (*Cosmopolitan* 219). Her boots are black and rise just below her knees. She carries a purse and a text box covers her rear. If it were not for the lack of clothes there would be nothing out of the ordinary in this advertisement.



Another advertisement for shoes from Jimmy Choo shoes shows a pair of women from the shoulders and below walking along a beach (*Elle* 147). They are clad only in skin-toned underwear and a pair of brightly colored sandals. The picture cuts off at the underside of their breasts. These two ads are ripe with sexuality, based on the lack of clothing, in an attempt to show the customer base nearly the entire uncensored body image. While it is true that the main focus of these images is indeed the shoes, it does not take away from the nearly nude women in the photos.

The lack of artifacts in these two images does something interesting to the models. Rather than the things they are wearing becoming artifacts, their bodies become the artifact. This is because the focus of the ads is the shoes. The message here is that if you buy these shoes no one will notice anything else you are wearing. This idea just scratches the surface of the image though. Looking deeper into the symbolism, one can see that the marketers are trying to say, “if you buy these shoes, you get this body” and that, “If you have this body you can flaunt it”. This is a very straightforward approach to sexual imagery, one that is somewhat common in the United States.

Shoe advertising in *Mini* is much more reserved than in its U.S. counterparts. In this advertisement a series of four women model a variety of shoes in a variety of locations (*Adidas* 60-61). Each woman is entirely clothed and seems not to be making any attempts to be seen as lustful. One model appears bored, another distracted, one patient, and the last one appears to be striking a playful pose. Of all these images nothing in regards to the artifact, present or missing, implies the sexual portrayal of the women. Instead, the images seem to pay more attention to the various personalities portrayed. A noticeable amount of leg appears, but the overall focus is on the shoes, not the models.

On the Japanese side the findings in terms of body image are slightly more suggestive than the previously discussed images. In a small pamphlet within *Mini* a series of shoe advertisements spans sixteen pages. Again, the advertisements seem to concentrate primarily on the different personalities portrayed. However, in the last few pages the body positioning takes on somewhat more sexual undertones (Mannish 12-13). In one image a model is on the floor, looking up at the camera. She is wearing an oversized T-shirt with her legs exposed, while winking suggestively over her sunglasses. The woman's position below the camera puts her at a subordinate level, while the suggestive wink portrays a muted hint of sexuality. The next image shows the same model standing in a different outfit (over shirt, a large T-shirt, boots, and a shoulder bag). She is lightly pulling at her shirt to cover her legs while looking at the camera over her shoulder. The image of her pulling down her shirt mildly suggests she might be surprised by the camera's presence and is trying to hide her body from it. While this may not be overt sexual imagery, it does suggest that the marketers involved with this image recognize that a woman might have something she wishes not to show the public. If this is the case, they are therefore acknowledging her sexuality in a roundabout way. They are saying that this woman has sexuality, but in the interest of preserving her innocence she is to hide it.

Body positioning is also used in the United States. An advertisement for JCPenny clothing shows a collage of images, all featuring women (*People* 20-21). In this ad all of the women are smiling and striking poses that can be considered fun loving. However, the sexual imagery can be found in the women's position in relation to the camera. One leaps in the air, profile to the camera, letting the audience see how well her jeans fit her

rear. Above her, a woman is pulling back her shoulders, accentuating her breasts, and next to her a woman is cocking her hip. The rear, breasts, and hips are all seen as very sexual body parts in the U.S. culture, and the fact that these women are displaying them in a fun manner is a nod to sexual imagery. This ad is saying celebrate your clothes, celebrate your body, and celebrate your sexuality.

Innuendo is a large part of advertising in the United States. Many advertisers try to incorporate clever sexual imagery into their ads in an attempt to give their products or events a sexual spin. An advertisement for Wilson Phillips, a vocal group illustrates this idea (Wilson 85). At first glance the image may seem innocent enough, but on further examination it becomes clear that there is sexual innuendo present. The image features the three female members standing in close proximity to each other and gathered around a microphone attached to a stand. The manner in which they grasp the microphone stand and the expressions they seem to wear in reaction to this touch are interesting in this advertisement. The three members all grasp the stand as though it is a phallic symbol, and the facial expressions only serve to reinforce this. The centermost member serves as the best example as she gingerly grasps the pole with her head flung back in what can only be described as ecstasy. The member on the right also seems to be experiencing a similar reaction to this touch, but to a lesser degree. This example of advertising is very much the opposite of what can be found in the Japanese equivalent. Five members of the incredibly popular J-pop group, AKB48, span the width of two pages, but traces of innuendo are absent (AKB 6-7). Instead each member lovingly coddles a variety of small animals, ranging from a rabbit to a monkey. The background is a light pink, and it is obvious the

advertisers wanted to go for an image of innocence, much like the early discussion of the ad for Japanese lip-gloss.

A particularly striking example of innuendo in advertising in U.S. advertising comes from an image previously discussed, the Maybelline lipstick advertisement (*Elle* 103). As mentioned, a rose is shown in this image, half flower and half lipstick. Jutting upward on the right side of the ad a particularly wet rose petal is dripping upon a fully extended tube of lipstick. The innuendo in this advertisement stems from U.S. euphemisms in which the word flower can be used interchangeably with vagina. With this in mind the image becomes a cornucopia of sexual images. A brigade of phallic lipstick is penetrating the rose that is divided in half, insinuating the act of sexual intercourse. Meanwhile, on the right side of the image the rose petal seems to be lubricating another lipstick tube, acting, yet again, as a phallic symbol. Nothing with this degree of sexual imagery was found within the Japanese material illustrating a clear difference in the use of sexual innuendo within advertising.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The use of semiotic analysis proved to be quite useful in researching this topic, due to the flexibility of the method. This versatility can be seen by the variety of topics it has been applied to. Karithii Nixon used this method in conjunction with rhetorical analysis and critical discourse to evaluate the success of an anti-piracy campaign in South Africa (379-383). Semiotics is also applicable in the medical field, which can be seen in the worldwide campaign to prevent AIDS. Semiotics has been applied to track the understanding of AIDS-prevention symbols and slogans (Kim and Oh 13). This study again shows the adaptability of semiotics not only across different applications, but also

across various cultures as this specific study takes into account the meaning of the red ribbon symbol across culture boundaries. This adaptability of semiotic analysis has proven invaluable in the study of advertisements, allowing multiple cultural viewpoints to be utilized within the same study.

By exploring selected advertisements available within the magazines a great deal was learned about the fashion in which both the U.S. culture, and the Japanese culture portray sex to their target audiences. Within the advertisements for makeup the approaches to sexuality seem to be in contrast with one another. Each one places a heavy emphasis on the color choices at hand, with both Maybelline, and L'Oreal choosing to place focus on colors that represent mystery, desire, and passion, whereas in Japan Maquillage focuses on pink, a symbol of innocence and childhood.

The contrasting nature of these advertisements tells each audience what they should aspire to be in terms of physical appearance and sexuality in the United States. The U.S. ads suggest that women are to take control of their sexuality and brandish it as a tool with which they can work. The Japanese ad, on the other hand, suggests to women that they should remain humble in terms of their sexuality. A woman's sexuality is something pure, and she herself is something innocent. The Maquillage ad does not portray women as powerful; instead the product marketers insinuate that a woman is to play the role of the good wife or the innocent virgin.

The differing use of seemingly nude models is also quite telling in the context of magazine images. Within two of the advertisements for shoes women are not wearing many, if any, clothes. The women put on an air of confidence with regards to their bodies. Naturally, the focus of these ads is on the shoes. They imply that should you wear

these shoes, no one will notice anything else you put on. Yet, the advertisers make it a point to tell women that their body is something desirable and powerful in the culture of the United States and as such they should not be ashamed of it.

The Japanese have a different take on a woman's body. The ad in *Mini Special Book* has a seemingly small image of the girl gently tugging down her oversized shirt to hide her legs. To the U.S. consumer this image would bear little importance and might suggest that no sexuality is being portrayed within it. However, the fact that the product marketers chose to use this image is quite revealing in terms of Japanese values. This ad recognizes that women do have a sense of sexuality, and it should be covered in consideration of modesty, possibly to protect the innocence previously mentioned. Next to this image the same model lies in a submissive, yet slightly suggestive pose involving a wink. This image may serve to reinforce the concept of the obedient woman.

Innuendo remains a subject that belongs uniquely to the United States in this research, with references to a woman's flower and phallic symbols to match. This practice seems to be missing in the Japanese advertising practices. This may imply that U.S. citizens have grown accustomed to sexual images, and have begun to associate sexuality with many other objects outside of the body. Likewise, it implies that they are much more receptive to the innuendo and sexuality as a whole, at least in the public sphere. Japanese advertisers seem unwilling to convey sexual images, even in form of innuendo, which suggests a much more conservative view of sexuality not only from the company producing the ads, but also from the citizens receiving the ads.

Sexual imagery of men was more difficult to find in both cultures, making proper comparisons difficult, which is to say that further study should be conducted. However,

this does not mean it is entirely absent in the resources at hand. Sexuality of men is portrayed through exposure of skin and the employment of physical activity. Men are usually shown in these magazines doing some sort of physical exercise in an attempt to gain muscle. This is similar in both culture's magazines, showing that each society places a high value on a man showcasing muscle mass should he wish to be seen as desirable. This observation also makes it known that each culture recognizes a man's sexuality through body image, but none of these ads make a noticeable attempt to flaunt it in terms of marketing.

While sexual imagery was much more noticeable in U.S. advertising this is not to say that the Japanese do not use it. Instead, they simply wield a different portrayal of sexual imagery. The manner in which the Japanese show sexuality is through innocence. This is done through soft colors, like pink and white, and also through models posing in a way to suggest they are hiding something. This is not the Japanese way of ignoring sex: instead it is the Japanese way of portraying sex with an emphasis on innocence. The U.S. advertisers, as illustrated instead portray sex as something to be publicly acknowledged and in some cases flaunted. This investigation suggests that the different use of sexual imagery in U.S. and Japanese advertising results in part, from a focus on the ideas of sexual experience versus the notion of sexual innocence in each culture.

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