Chapter 6: Advertising and the challenges of 'laddism'.
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This chapter explores the way in which youth offers both possibilities and ongoing challenges to advertisers. Lynx (also known as Axe in some countries) will provide the narrative drive for the discussion and function as an illustration of the way in which a brand became aware of and tapped into the development of a new market sector, namely, deodorants and bodysprays for young lads. Acknowledging Lynx's twenty-year history, the chapter will focus on how the brand through its advertising has continually reinvented itself, keeping pace with both the rise and demise of lad culture. In view of this, the main topics considered include: characteristics of the youth market, development of brand loyalty, identity construction and media/new media influences.

The youth market and Lynx

The youth market is one of the most coveted of all segments due to youths spending power, their ability to be trendsetters, their receptivity to new products and their tremendous potential for becoming consumers for life (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). It is difficult to define the youth market as today's children are growing older younger (KGOY: Kids Growing Older Younger) and many older people have mindsets similar to those of the younger generation. The youth market is complex, segmented and hard to understand. Young people are vulnerable to short-lived fads, individualistic, extremely media-savvy, advertising literate and resistant to advertising efforts. The main challenge for advertisers is to understand youth and to 'reach' young people in a credible way (Saxton, 2005). Lynx's target audience is young men, primarily adolescents, age 16 to 24.

Lynx advertising was developed around the core brand property of seduction; Lynx helps the young man to get the girl with the brand being portrayed as a 'confidence booster' and 'an accomplice' (Fennell, 1999). According to Lynx's agency, Bartle Bogle, Hegarty, "when the Lynx campaign was developed the deodorant market was characterised by functional communications that focused on odour control" (Nicholls and Raillard, 2004). It was then decided that its primary benefit was actually the provision of confidence and that this was most relevant in the context of getting a girl. This is the so-called 'Lynx effect'.

Launched as Axe in France in 1983, Lynx is now available in more than 60 countries worldwide. The brand is called Lynx in the UK and Australia but Axe in other countries; Axe being considered too aggressive a brand name for English-speaking markets accompanied by other trademark issues. For simplicity, the name Lynx will be adopted throughout this chapter. Lynx

started life as a deodorant and has also been expanded into other personal care niches, for example, aftershave, body sprays, shower gels, shaving gels and razors. However, despite a series of extensions into aftershave (1989) and roll-on deodorant (1991), the brand's growth had tailed off by the mid-1990s. Lynx is a youth brand and as such is subject to constant regeneration to attract younger new users (Weed, 2000) ranging from brand positioning to product packaging and effective communication. To counter the halt in growth, the Lynx marketers went clubbing and shopping in order to develop new marketing strategies for the brand that would capture the interest and imagination of their target audience. When considering new ways for Lynx to go beyond just being a male toiletries product, “the brand had to think about everything to do with seduction and masculinity” (Weed, 2000). This theme underpins the whole of the brand’s identity and therefore, in addition to television and print advertising, some rather laddish web-based activity in the form of viral marketing was also used to both reach and connect with its target audience. It was a success. In 1996, the new marketing campaign re-established the identity of Lynx, especially in the UK, as an icon in the revitalised young men's grooming products market.

Lynx in a socio-cultural context

The growth of the male grooming market is part of the sector dedicated to what the beauty industry refers to as male image maintenance. Lifestyle magazines first highlighted the importance of grooming for the modern man and Unilever took this one step further by introducing male grooming parlours. At this point the Lynx Barbershop was created, the intention being to fill a gap in the market between traditional barbershops and women’s salons by providing an environment totally dedicated to young men. Lynx salons offered Playstations and TV before and during the grooming experience with of course the opportunity to purchase from the range of Lynx products on the way out. The first Lynx Barbershop opened in Oxford Street, London in 2000 however this idea was abandoned after 14 months. A company spokesman stated “Brand extensions are not simply a sideline for us - we set aggressive targets for all our initiatives, the barber shops were successful and generated a lot of publicity, but failed to meet the targets.” (Cozens, 2002:23) This is evidence of both consistent brand innovation, a key theme of this chapter, but that not all produced the outcomes expected.

However, despite the success of the regeneration of Lynx in the mid- 1990s, in 2001, according to the consumer market analyst Mintel, one in five men still considered grooming products as being solely for women (Mintel, 2001). The reluctance of the male population to embrace male grooming products was a concern for both the producers of such products and for the advertising industry. Before we present two case studies of recent Lynx advertising which demonstrate how this second wave of challenges were addressed, it is important to look at social and cultural discourses around changing masculinities which preceded and followed the attempt to target the male consumer.

Prior to the 1980s concerns around grooming and therefore desires to purchase grooming products were socially constructed as feminine. Campaigns for products such as Brylcreem for hair in the 1950s and Brut aftershave in the 1970s were very careful to ensure that their advertisements emphasised a traditional masculinity. The term traditional masculinity refers to the dominant discourse of masculinity prior to the 1980s. Men were seen as the breadwinners, the wage-earners who supported their families. Also masculinity was defined in opposition to femininity through ideas of machismo, rationality, and lack of emotion. For example, Brylcreem showed in one advertisement a man in overalls, working beneath a car and covered in grease. Later in the 1970s, Brut used the successful and well known boxer Henry Cooper in its campaign. Such images aimed to negate the possibility of either feminization or homoeroticism in male grooming products.

The emergence of the new man

The 1980s brought economic and social changes which impacted greatly on the male grooming market and concomitantly the advertising industry. As John Beynon states, "Masculinity was more extensively transformed by economic and commercial forces in the 1980s than at any previous time" (2002:100). It has been argued that men emerged as a gendered group in the 1980s. What exactly does this mean? To consider changes in discourses of normative masculinity it is important to consider the social context in which they occurred.

One of the key social discourses to emerge prior to this time is a feminist critique of female representation. The Women's Movement of the late 1960s, early 1970s problematised gendered representation in the media. Another movement which emerged in the early 1980s to challenge dominant discourse and representation was found in the Gay Rights campaigns which like the Women's Movement sought to achieve equality with heterosexual masculinity. Together, these movements drew attention to the images of men in the media. Prior to such critiques, masculinity was treated unproblematically. However, in the 1980s we see the rise of masculinity studies in academia with key figures such as Bob Connell and Michael Kimmel interrogating social discourses and representations of masculinity. It is around this time that the idea of a crisis of masculinity is seen to emerge as a response to the criticisms made against it and it is around the 1980s that we see the emergence of the 'new man'. The 'new man' represented a disidentification with traditional masculinity. New man participated in the domestic sphere. That is to say, domestic labour was no longer seen as an entirely female domain with men seen to engage in both household chores and childcare. Prior to this, the domestic arena was seen as a feminine arena and therefore any man participating in such labour was deemed to be exhibiting feminine attributes.

New man believed in gender equality, was anti-sexist and in touch with his emotions. He was sensitive, caring and happy to incorporate traits which had previously been considered feminine into his life. The reality of this shift is debatable and of course it is impossible to definitively separate the social reality of masculinities from media constructs. However, this shift to a

discourse of the new man is relevant to consider in the context of the emergence of the male grooming market that we see today. Beynon (2002) describes the new man as both nurturer and narcissist. Sigmund Freud (1914) identified narcissism as a feature of the psyche. He drew on the Greek myth of Narcissus as a metaphor for his account of self- directed libido. Narcissus was a Greek mythological character that spurned the advances of nymphs, eventually falling in love with his own reflection in the water. Narcissism has come to describe "a tendency to self-worship and to develop an excessive interest in one's own personal features" (Cashmore, 2006:102). Therefore, the identification of new man as nurturer and narcissist, traits previously identified with femininity, had a specific impact on male representation and the male grooming market.

The 1980s also brought new visual representations of men. There was an increasing display and sexualisation of the male body in mainstream cinema, television and in advertising (Evans & Gamman 1995, Mort 1996, Edwards 1997). Accompanying this, the emergence of male style magazines such as *GQ* and *Arena* presented images of the self-confident and well groomed man. Further, as traditional industries fell, economic and social changes led to a loss of "status, self esteem and the old moral authority which men used to have just by being men" (Coward, 1999:86). At the same time, an increase in 'image industries' such as advertising, media, promotions and public relations led to what has been termed the commercialization of masculinity.

Pertinent questions have been raised as to whether a genuine development in the nature of masculinity and an advance in sexual politics occurred. Arguably the notion of a change in masculinities simply represents a crude marketing device or a media-driven illusion (Edwards, 1997, Beynon 2002). Certainly advertising led the way in a new erotic objectification of the male body, breaking taboos regarding display and feminization. The often cited Levi's advertisement featuring Nick Kamen stripping to his underwear in a launderette in order to wash his jeans exemplifies this. As Mort (1987) suggests, this new visual coding of masculinity produced representations of a more self-conscious sense of maleness.

The new lad

The 1990s sees the rise of what has been termed the 'new lad' with laddism as a response to the idea of new man. There was a shift in both discourse and representation which seems to revert to the promotion of traditional masculinity. Lads' magazines such as *Loaded* and *FHM* arrived on the scene achieving considerable success with their focus on drinking, football and sex. Arguably, an antidote to new man was offered to the next generation. Also, new laddism represents a more working class machismo in response to the anti-sexist, sensitive new man. There is a reassertion of something fundamentally masculine (Gill, 2007).

The coding of male bodies as to be looked at and desired in a way traditionally associated with female bodies remains. Susan Bordo (1999:179) argues that "Feminists might like to imagine that Madison Avenue heard our

pleas for sexual equality and finally gave us "men as sex objects." But what's really happened is that women have been the beneficiaries of what might be described as a triumph of pure consumerism-- and with it, a burgeoning male and fitness and beauty culture-- over homophobia and the taboos against male vanity, male "femininity," and erotic display of the male body that have gone along with it."

So the 1990s sees a backlash to the new man yet the display of idealised and eroticised male bodies in advertising increases. Contemporary advertising for male grooming products attempts to negotiate representations which combine sensitivity and machismo. For example, the recent use of Pierce Brosnan in L'Oreal adverts for their skincare range for men demonstrates how the combination of sensitive yet macho masculinity is used to persuade men that skin products are not only for women. This is the social context of masculinity within which Lynx addresses its target market, the next generation of men.

Lynx's address

In 2000, *Advertising Age* reported that there was a need for the industry to increase adspend for men's grooming products. The aim was to counter the problem of such products, even basics like shampoo, being perceived as in some way un-masculine and that a strategy was needed to persuade men that grooming was not only a feminine trait. Noting the shift to new laddism, Bartle, Bogle, Hegarty produced a series of campaigns which addressed the problem by employing a laddish approach. This approach aimed to connote social values around male status and identity through the magical promise of "the Lynx effect". Not only does the Lynx effect offer a transformation in terms of attraction, but also in terms of the rite of passage from boy to man through what Goffman (1979) termed "hyper-ritualization". These social issues are the concerns of the male youth market. Playing on young men's anxieties around status and attraction, Lynx advertising offers a resolution. The transformation produced through the Lynx effect is not that of the idealised male Adonis, but to an ordinary man who now has status and the potential to attract many women. The adverts are not solely engaged with selling the product; they are also constructing the brand image which revolves around the possibilities of the Lynx effect. To demonstrate how Lynx advertising taps into and offers to resolve the anxieties associated with male youth, this chapter will conclude with two case studies looking at the campaigns for Lynx Boost and Lynx Pulse. Lynx Boost directly addresses the issue of changing masculinities whilst Lynx Pulse highlights the need to draw upon popular culture to engineer effective communication.

Case Study 1: Lynx Boost and Towelboy

The 20 second ad opens in a sparsely accessorised white tiled bathroom with only a three panelled mirror and a corner shower with a plain white curtain. This is a functional masculine bathroom. As the music, *Change My Mind* by The Blueskins (2006) begins, the curtain is swept to one side and a young man emerges swiftly from the shower cubicle. Chest covered in soap suds, he grabs a blue towel, wraps it around his waist and is next seen leaving the building through gated doors. As he passes a hotdog stall on the street other

customers turn and stare. The vendor passes him a hot dog as he strides past and the camera focuses on a young woman who, hot dog in hand, gazes longingly at him. He enters a busy night club, dancing purposefully through the crowd. The camera cuts to a shot of an older man standing behind a young woman at the bar. The older man's tongue protrudes from his mouth as he tries to lick the young woman's shoulder, a move she rejects with a hand gesture as she turns away from him. Our hero whips the towel from his waist and the camera pans back to allow a full view of his towel flick attack on the older man. The older man turns in surprise and we see but do not hear Towelboy's verbal dismissal. The young woman turns and looks at her hero with an expression of both gratitude and seduction. Over his shoulder another woman is giving the same admiring look. In the final scene, he wraps the blue towel around the woman's shoulders and they walk down the street, his arm placed protectively around her shoulder and his nakedness displayed as they walk away from the camera. The female voiceover announces in a sultry voice, "New Lynx Boost, stimulating shower gel" as the final scene is a return to the white bathroom and we see the product placed on a shelf in Towelboy's shower.

This advert contains many signs and referents which will appeal to young men's anxieties around attraction and status. A resolution is offered through the Lynx effect. In Goffman's terms, the advert represents a hyper-ritualization of the rite of passage from boy to man. A symbolic entry into desired social and sexual worlds is effected through the hero's supremacy over the older man in competition for the woman. This advert is also informed by the juxtaposition between nature and civilization through the imagery of the naked man breaking free from civilized restraint. Not only is Towelboy naked in the world, his freedom from social restraint is symbolically marked as he leaves his apartment through a gated door. This advert then is about a masculinity which can escape from rules and restrictions, which is close to nature. It is about access to status, seduction and magic through power over others. The advert addresses anxieties around becoming a man in a time of shifting gender roles through control of women, via the product of course, and through a realistic image of man rather than an idealised image of an unattainable masculinity. For the target audience of boys and young men, Lynx advertising presents a powerful message through visuals, narrative, music and humour. This message taps into discourses of new laddism to present a promise of desired transformation.

Case study 2: The Lynx Pulse campaign

Key to the ongoing success of Lynx has been the strategy of launching a new fragrance variant every year, around 20 in total. Lynx has used an array of methods to develop these new variants; firstly, fragrance descriptors (Lynx Musk, Marine, Oriental); geography used to evoke feelings (Lynx Alaska, Africa, Java); abstract names (Lynx Apollo, Gravity, Dimension); and more recently, mating game insights helped to develop Lynx Pulse, Touch and Click (Millar, Fawcus and Bloor, 2006). Launched across Europe in 2003 (with the hugely popular 'Dancing man' commercial), the Lynx Pulse fragrance has

been one of the most successful variants. We now consider the Lynx Pulse campaign in detail as an effective example of integrated, multi-channel communication. It took an insight into the mating game and leveraged it in a humourous and aspirational way along with a recognition that 'women love a man who can dance'. Furthermore, it developed a mix that created a music track, a dance-floor craze and an award winning TV commercial.

The big idea behind the Lynx Pulse campaign was the use of the right kind of 'music' and 'dance'. A number of studies have shown that music is one of the key influences in the lives of young people (Saxton, 2005; White, 2006). Music is an intrinsic entertainment for young people and it takes up more time in their lives than sport, the cinema or going to the pub (Saxton, 2005). Dance relates to Lynx's brand territory of seduction: getting girls. The Lynx Pulse campaign featuring *Make Luv* by Room 5, proved it is possible for an unknown track to score a huge success off the back of a suitable ad and for sales of the advertised product to rise similarly. The music was simple and infectious (Nicholls and Raillard, 2004). The first phase of the campaign was to send this music track to key opinion formers such as DJs ensuring that it was exposed to the right people in the right places (Saxton, 2005). The music track was accompanied by merchandise such as T-shirts, DJ slipmats and record bags.

The next phase was to introduce an animated online character called 'The Dotman', made of the same graphic elements as the Lynx Pulse logo, available as a screen saver, and performing the Lynx Pulse dance on the screen. The TV commercial and PR efforts followed the seeding stage of the music and dance elements. *Make Luv* was number one in the UK official charts for a month (Nicholls and Raillard, 2004) and a survey showed that 73% of people identified the ad as a conversation piece whilst the UK average for 'word of mouth' stood at 25-39% (Nicholls and Raillard, 2004). Lynx have continued to maintain a strong online presence, developing content that is both participatory and reflective of the brand's evolving identity.

New media strategies and brand loyalty

As discussed earlier, youth becomes increasingly 'wired' and it is possible to use new media to reach key movers and shakers and lead the market (White, 2006). The Lynx Pulse campaign demonstrated the success of viral marketing and word-of-mouth among young people. Youth audiences thus became one of the key targets of the developing fashion for so-called ambient media and event marketing. At the end of 2004, Lynx held a live music concert north of the Arctic Circle. An audience of 300 competition winners enjoyed a show which was filmed by *Channel 4* and aired in its youth slot, *T4*. This is an example of 'brand entertainment'. Brand entertainment is a new and growing marketing discipline. It is best defined as where a brand creates consumer entertainment that would not have existed without that brand and where consumers choose their involvement (Dawson and Hall, 2005). In October 2006, Myspace launched a branded community for Lynx Boost, allowing users to interact with the character from the Lynx Boost ad, Towel Boy, and play online computer games. As western cultures are increasingly driven by

entertainment, brands have to deliver entertainment to compete for attention (Dawson and Hall, 2005). In addition, as cynical consumers increasingly edit out brands that fail to entertain them, brands like Coke and Nike are becoming entertainment media in their own right through activities like My Music and Run London.

Young people are more brand 'aware' than other market segments but that does not mean automatically being brand 'loyal'. And where loyalty exists, while it may be intense, this does not mean that it is deeply rooted (Lammiman and Syrett, 2004). Brand loyalty, long a central construct in marketing, is a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991: 39). Levels of brand loyalty vary ranging from the non-loyal buyer who is completely indifferent to the brand, the satisfied and habitual buyer to the committed buyer. A brand that has a substantial group of extremely involved and committed buyers might be termed a 'charismatic' brand (Aaker, 1991: 41). Although Lynx was the essential kit for the teenage seducer, once he approached 18 or 19 he started to grow out of the brand. In other words, it had become a victim of its own success; Lynx was a rite of passage for teenage guys and this placed a glass ceiling on growth (Bottomley, 2005). Lynx subsequently has developed marketing strategies which aim to hold onto their market as they grow from boy to man. This was the context in which the 'Getting Dressed' (2005) campaign was launched; its objective was to broaden Lynx's appeal without alienating the core audience. The slogan was 'You never know when'. The research has shown that Lynx was seen as part of a pre-going out, pre-pulling ritual (Bottomley, 2005) and that needed to change because it wasn't relevant for older guys. For older guys, the whole mating game process was less predatory and more engaging. Lynx had to reassure them that they would always be prepared. The commercial began with a young man and woman waking up in bed. In reverse, they proceed to follow their trail of clothes back to where they first met, the supermarket. Then they push the two trolleys off in different directions. The focus was not on the guy pulling a girl but on the relationship. It was a mature way to play the mating game. It demonstrated that girls want the same thing as men and the mating game is always afoot (you can pull any time, any place). The idea was that the Lynx guy could pull in the most unexpected places because he was always ready. The Lynx 'Getting Dressed' TV commercial won a Gold Lion at Cannes for international advertising quality.

The advertising industry must be continually aware of and able to tap into a youth market which is subject to constant change and regeneration. In 2005, Saxton identified celebrity culture; music and fashion; technology and innovation; and family, leisure and diversity as the key influences in the lives of 15-24 year olds in Europe. According to White (2006), authenticity and honesty have now become important ingredients in today's brand communications to youth. Lynx achieved initial success through the awareness and ability to tap into the development of a new market sector in terms of young lads taking an interest in their appearance while also facing anxieties around changing gender roles in society. By grounding their brand identity in realistic narratives of attainable male appearance while playing to

young men's anxieties and fantasies, Lynx have retained a dominant share in the youth grooming market. In 2007 global sales of Lynx reached the €1bn (£750m) mark; quite an advance on its €300m (£228m) total of ten years ago (Jack, 2008). 2008 will herald a further brand innovation as 'Lynx 3' is launched: allowing the user to customise their fragrance on the basis of an innovative dispenser. This comes at a time when 'laddism' has potentially waned but at the same time Lynx's advertising still needs to keep a firm hold on lad culture.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how the advertising industry addresses the male youth market through the example of Lynx as both brand and product. Targeting this group has posed specific challenges: challenges that must be continually faced in order to maintain brand success particularly as the era of the lads' mags appears to have peaked. As BBH UK chairman, Jim Carroll, has argued the quest is to remain relevant (Jack, 2008). Using the example of male grooming products we have shown how advertising must be aware of and tap into evolving discourses around gender and identity. Further, how changing media environments present both problems and solutions in appealing to contemporary youth.

Questions for students:

In various Lynx campaigns as discussed above, what are the associations that the Lynx brand has developed?

Who are the competitors of Lynx? How does Lynx differ from the profile of competitor brands?

What does the Lynx brand mean to the youth market segment?

Consider Lynx's use of ambient media and new media strategies. What is your experience in relation to internet advertising and event marketing in general?

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