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History 380

Commercials of the 1950's

Today commercials are seen utilizing the most recent and up to date technologies, techniques, and celebrities. What were commercials of the past like? What kind of tone or characteristics did they have? It is clear that over time many things have changed including the people. With that change came a corresponding change in marketing to those people. I will be looking at a set of commercials from the 1950's through the web domain archive.org. and describe some of these major changes to see what they reveal about American values and concerns of that decade.

A major factor that seems popular is the idea of a stay at home wife. This value can be seen in countless commercials. First example of this would be in a laundry detergent commercial. The commercials format is a male in a suit and talking like a salesman. The man only refers to 'Ladies' when describing the product. This commercial blatantly marketed their product to woman because it at the time laundry was a chore for the wife. The second commercial and second in the compilation is a General Electric advertisement for a refrigerator. This add once again is narrated this time with the same sort of smooth salesman voice, but is less direct in their approach to targeting. Throughout the entirety of the commercial there is a woman in the kitchen utilizing key aspects of the fridge showcasing its ease. The commercial seems to run on the American value of dependability stating its number of units sold, if everyone else bought this one you should to feel.

Another interesting advertisement from the 1950s that was a drastic change from today would be the tobacco and cigarettes commercials. These commercials would spend their duration talking about how clean or how cool you can be with their product. The first example of this is a L&M commercial. Using words like White or Clean not to provide a reason to smoke, but rather a reason to why not. The narrator telling the audience to live modern and live exciting through their product. Another tobacco add shows the same values, Lucky Brand. This commercial is two working men chatting about an advertisement they heard about one of their cigarettes. Peel the paper off and see the tobacco, using words like fresh, cleaner, perfect taste. Also using terms like friends, the commercials seem to create an atmosphere of everyone being on the same page.

These are just two of the many different characteristics of commercials and advertisements of the 1950s. As the values of the population has changed so had marketing with it. The wife waiting at home and the cigarettes for the great life seem to be a ideas of the past.

I pledge (460 word count)

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