

Finding Folklore in Magazine Ads
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Course Project
FLK 373

My research focused on folklore in advertisements found in Parents Magazine. The twenty examples were taken from eight issues of Parents spanning from January 1996 to April 1997 [see Table 3]. Because several types of folklore were present in the advertisements, items were organized into six general categories based on their folklore content. The resulting six categories were 1) folk heroes, 2) angels, 3) magic or magical characters, 4) nursery rhymes, 5) folk sayings, and 6) Easter folklore [see Table 1].

Four of the twenty ads depicted folk heroes. This category was found in a series of advertisements for OshKosh B'Gosh, a children's clothing company. These four ads each use a different folk hero; by this term I mean someone who has become a part of our historical folklore, regardless of whether the individual was a "real person." Each of these ads (#1-#4) uses the name of a folk hero as well as a symbol associated with each particular name. For example, the first ad features a picture of John Anthony Hancock, an 11 month old child, wearing a Baby B'Gosh outfit; in his hand he holds a feather quill which is a symbol that has been attached to John Hancock the signer of the American Declaration of Independence. The caption reads "John Hancock And His Signature Look." Ad #2 pictures Benjamin Franklin Greer (age 4) in an OshKosh outfit holding a string with a kite in the background. Its caption reads "Benjamin Franklin Experiments With A New Look." The third ad in this category pictures David Maxwell Crockett (age 3) in an OshKosh outfit and holding a coonskin cap. The caption reads "Davy Crockett Explores The Frontiers Of Fashion." Ad #4 shows a picture of Robin William Hood, Jr., age 5, also wearing an OshKosh outfit along with a cap with a feather in it. Its caption is

“Robin Hood Lives His Life In Legendary Fashion.”

Three of the twenty ads (#5-#7) featured angels. In this category, 2 of the ads showed wings, 2 showed halos, and 2 actually printed the word “angel.” An ad for a First Alert carbon monoxide and smoke alarm featured a picture of a winged angel holding a baby; under the picture read “Guardian angel.” The opposite page featured a picture of the carbon monoxide and smoke alarm, and under this picture read “Assistant guardian angel.” A Toys “R” Us/Huggies ad pictured a young child in a diaper; the child had angel’s wings, a halo, and was pictured in clouds. The last angel ad was from Gerber; its caption read “Introducing Gerber Sauces. Perfect over angel’s hair.” At the bottom of the ad was a picture of a plate of angel hair pasta with Gerber spaghetti sauce being poured over it. At the top was a baby in a high chair with the contents of the plate on its head.

Seven of the ads featured what I have termed magic or magical characters. Of these ads, 5 had pictures of magical characters, 2 pictured magic wands, 1 showed a genie’s lamp, and 4 showed “fairy dust” (see ads #11-#14). Magical characters pictured ranged from Mr. Clean (the strong genie whose reflection we see on a mopped floor in ad #9) to “musketeers” (ad #10) to Snap, Crackle, and Pop (the magical characters who try to sell us Rice Krispies cereal--ad #8). Two of the ads for Huggies diapers (#12 and #13) pictured baby fairies who both wielded magic wands. Another Huggies ad (#14) pictured a baby holding a magic genie’s lamp. All of the Huggies ads pictured what I termed “fairy dust”, a glowing stream of particles that give us the impression that magic is being worked.

Two items fell into the category of nursery rhymes. Each of these ads contained a nursery rhyme that had been slightly modified for use in the advertisement. Ad #16 makes use of the children's rhyme "a tisket, a tasket," while #15 (an ad for an evenflo baby carrying system) modifies the rhyme "this little piggy went to market."

The ads using folk sayings (#17 and #18) are very straightforward in their use of folklore. An ad for Hershey's Kisses shows two kisses (one plain and one with almonds) and is simply captioned "Kissin cousins," a common folk expression. The other ad is for State Farm Insurance and it asks us, "Who'll keep your ducks in a row if you're not around?," again making use of a common folk saying.

The last category I looked at was Easter folklore. Two of the twenty ads fit this category. Ad #19 tells us to "make Easter dessert quick as a bunny;" it is complete with a picture of the dessert, including the bunnies that adorn it. The final ad is from Hershey's Kisses. It pictures a nest (a common Easter symbol) filled with five kisses, and we are wished "Happy Easter" from Hershey's at the bottom.

My work on this project showed me that advertisers frequently use folklore in creating their ads. This fact does not come as a surprise because our folklore is what we relate to, in fact, it is who we are, so this makes it an excellent tool for advertisers to employ. We must also remember that the advertisers share this folklore themselves so it is natural for them to draw on it when creating advertisements. Though this was a small project, I found the use of folklore in magazine ads to be very common--evidenced by the many types of folklore that I came across. To find so much in this small scope points to

the integral relationship between folklore and the media.

List of Items

1. OshKosh B'Gosh Ad (John Hancock)--Parents Magazine April 1997
2. OshKosh B'Gosh Ad (Benjamin Franklin)--Parents Magazine April 1996
3. OshKosh B'Gosh Ad (Davy Crockett)--Parents Magazine April 1997
4. OshKosh B'Gosh Ad (Robin Hood)--Parents Magazine August 1996
5. First Alert Ad--Parents Magazine November 1996
6. Toys "R" Us/Huggies Ad--Parents Magazine February 1996
7. Gerber Ad--Parents Magazine April 1996
8. Rice Krispies Ad--Parents Magazine November 1996
9. Ultra Mr. Clean Ad--Parents Magazine April 1996
10. 3Musketeers Ad--Parents Magazine February 1996
11. Huggies Ad--Parents Magazine November 1996
12. Huggies Ad--Parents Magazine May 1996
13. Huggies Ad--Parents Magazine January 1996
14. Huggies Ad--Parents Magazine December 1996
15. evenflo Ad--Parents Magazine December 1996
16. Starburst Ad--Parents Magazine April 1996
17. State Farm Insurance Ad--Parents Magazine April 1997
18. Hershey's Kisses Ad (Kissin' Cousins)--Parents Magazine August 1996
19. Cool Whip Ad--Parents Magazine April 1996
20. Hershey's Kisses Ad (Happy Easter)--Parents Magazine April 1996

Table 1
Types of Folklore Present in Advertisements

<u>Type</u>	<u># of Ads containing type</u>	<u>Dates of Ads</u>
Folk Heroes	4	4/97, 4/96, 4/97, 8/96
Angels	3	11/96, 2/96, 4/96
Magic or Magical Characters	7	11/96, 4/96, 2/96, 11/96, 6/96, 1/96, 12/96
Nursery Rhymes	2	12/96, 4/96
Folk Sayings	2	4/97, 8/96
Easter Folklore	2	4/96, 4/96

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Table 2
Folklore Content in Ads (By Categories)

Category 1

<u>Folk Heroes</u>	<u>4/97</u>	<u>4/96</u>	<u>4/97</u>	<u>8/96</u>
name	*	*	*	*
symbol associated with name	*	*	*	*

Category 2

<u>Angels</u>	<u>11/96</u>	<u>2/96</u>	<u>4/96</u>
wings	*	*	
halo	*	*	
word "angel"	*		*

Category 3

<u>Magic/Magical Characters</u>	<u>11/96</u>	<u>4/96</u>	<u>2/96</u>	<u>11/96</u>	<u>6/96</u>	<u>1/96</u>	<u>12/96</u>
picture of magical character(s)	*	*	*		*	*	
magic wand					*	*	
genie's lamp							*
"fairy dust"				*	*	*	*

Category 4

<u>Nursery Rhymes</u>	<u>12/96</u>	<u>4/96</u>
modified nursery rhyme verse	*	*

Category 5

<u>Folk Sayings</u>	<u>4/97</u>	<u>8/96</u>
statement of folk saying	*	*

Category 6

<u>Easter Folklore</u>	<u>4/96</u>	<u>4/96</u>
word "Easter"	*	*
word "bunny"	*	
picture of bunny	*	
picture of nest		*

Table 3
Ads Used per Issue (by date)

<u>Issue</u>	<u># of Ads Used</u>
January 1996	1
February 1996	2
April 1996	6
May 1996	1
August 1996	2
November 1996	3
December 1996	2
<u>April 1997</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	20