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Chase and Sanborn: The Morally Gray History of Advertisements

If your husband ever finds out
you're not "store-testing" for fresher coffee...

... if he discovers you're still taking chances on getting flat, stale coffee ... we be unto you!

For today there's a sure and certain way to test for freshness before you buy



Here's how easy it is to be sure of fresher coffee



Look for the "Dome Top" Can of Chase & Sanborn. That firm, rounded top shows it's packed under pressure, fresh from the mills.

Just do this:
Press your thumb against the dome top before you buy. If it's firm, it's fresh. If the top gives, pressure's gone—take another. It's the one way to get the freshest coffee ever packed.

No other can lets you test!
You can't test an ordinary flat top can. Some are "Makers" that have let us in on real freshness. But all flat top cans look alike. You can't tell which are good and which are stale.

Here's the payoff!
Just as you pour a cup, they'll wash away! For Chase & Sanborn is a glorious blend of more expensive coffee... brought to you fresher. No wonder Chase & Sanborn pays a flavor dividend you won't find in any other coffee!



"PRESSURE PACKED"

Chase & Sanborn

Advertising has been around ever since businesses have wanted to sell their products to the masses. It has been and will, for the foreseeable future, continue to be the main way we as consumers learn about new products and/or services that we can take advantage of. Over time, though, with continuous developments in technology and countless cultural changes in society as a whole, advertisements have had to adapt to better sell products to this constantly changing world. This is why advertisements we see on the internet and television today are significantly different from those produced in the past. However, many of the driving principles behind these older advertisements can still be found in modern advertisements today. Copywriters and advertising agencies still aim to play off of the core values and interests of their target audience in order to more successfully sell their products. What has changed, of course, is what those values and interests are. A lot of what was once considered widely acceptable is no longer considered so anymore. For this reason, we as modern consumers, may look at advertisements from the past with a level of shock and disgust; but, back in their time, they were considered normal and may have even been considerably successful as advertisements. Therefore, while it seems crazy to us now, the controversial ground coffee advertisement by *Chase and Sanborn* from the early 50's utilized eye-catching composition, fear and gender-roles of the era, and timeless design principles to create a powerful and effective advertisement for that time in advertising history.

One of the keys of creating effective advertisements is creating a composition that draws a reader or viewer's eyes to the advertisement itself. I chose this advertisement because in my simple Google search of "50's advertisements" it was one of the first to really capture my attention. The composition uses the styles of minimalism and high contrast to its advantage. The majority of the advertisement is simply negative space, which allows our eyes to be drawn to

whatever visuals the advertisement wants us to look at; if a composition is too crowded, a reader may simply not know where their eyes should begin, and they'll lose interest in the advertisement immediately. Therefore, the use of plenty of negative space make it more appealing to a consumer flipping through this magazine. In many cases, the lack of visuals is just as eye-catching as having many visuals. The minimalistic design also plays into the designers use of contrast; the juxtaposition of bold black text for the headline on top of the white background screams out to the reader "read me!" The other aspect that drew me to this advertisement, of course, was the depiction of domestic violence within the composition. While being a rather risqué image to utilize, one cannot deny it being effective in grabbing one's attention. Yet, while I do agree with it being eye-catching, it is certainly for a different reason than it was back when this advertisement was published.

One of the more jarring aspects of this advertisement is its basis on completely outdated societal beliefs and values. As I said, the imagery in this advertisement is definitely eye-catching; in the same vein of people slowing down to watch a car crash, if we see something taboo like domestic violence in a magazine advertisement, we're going to be drawn to it. For me, domestic violence is a very negative aspect of modern society that in no way should be condoned by anyone; and, in the modern day, there's absolutely no way an advertisement like this would ever be approved. However, when this was originally published, society was much different than it is today. It was a time when gender roles were significantly more pronounced and important to society: men were considered dominant in basically everything but housework and raising children and therefore something like domestic violence was noticeably more common and accepted. Men had to seem dominant over their wives and if that meant beating their wives then it was okay. This advertisement was built off that belief. This advertisement stated explicitly that

in order to be a good wife and avoid being hit, you would have to buy their coffee over their competition's. It didn't matter how true it was or not; this coffee could have tasted awful, but in the moment that didn't matter. Looking at an advertisement like this intended to instill fear into the hearts of any and all abused housewives who wanted nothing more than to keep their husbands happy. It simultaneously instilled fear and then dissipated it by giving it a solution, "don't want to get hit? Buy our coffee!" While it seems sadistic, tactics like this work for copywriters; advertisements want to promote products in a way that makes us feel like our lives will be better with this product in them and evoking an emotional response like this is the best way to do that. In regard to VALS, this advertisement, in its time, would have applied most heavily to Survivor type consumers. The whole premise of the advertisement is to promote housewives to be more cautious of their purchasing and to not take the risk of purchasing an inferior brand of coffee. Nowhere is the advertisement trying to make this seem cutting edge or trendy, simply useful to women everywhere who want to get fresh, quality coffee for their husbands to drink.

While the core values depicted in the *Chase and Sanborn* ad is undoubtedly outdated, it surprisingly utilizes some rather modern design styles and principles that put it way ahead of its time. While the Minimalism art movement was born in the 1960s, it would take a bit longer for it to really sink its root into the world of advertising. In the modern day, however, minimalism has become one of the more dominant design styles taking hold within the past five to ten years. Take Apple for example; this tech giant is inarguably one of the most recognizable brands in the world and utilizes nearly identical compositions for their own advertisements. A solid colored background, a depiction of the product in the foreground with, in some cases, another visual accompanying it, bold, high contrasting text announcing the product using a headline/slogan, and

subdued use of the logo and company name. Therefore, while *Chase and Sanborn's* coffee advertisement is unquestionably morally backwards, it still holds true to being well designed.

Even with its now controversial imagery, *Chase and Sanborn's* domestic violence centered coffee advertisement was undeniably successful in its day given its use of an eye-catching composition, a fear inducing message based on gender roles, and design styles that are still widely used today. Still, many people today will feel a bit uncomfortable looking at an advertisement like this, but that's certainly not a bad thing; in fact, it'd be more concerning if you didn't feel at least a bit weird knowing at one point this was okay to publish. I think, however, that relics of the past such as this should be used as an inspiration by us. Certainly not as what we should strive to be, but instead as what we don't want to return to. We should view advertisements with backward moral values like this with a sense of pride. Since this was published in the 50s, this advertisement shows just how much society has changed; how we've grown out of these early days of gender-based oppression into a society that is actively aiming at being more progressive. While we're certainly not perfect, we've certainly come a long way from happily accepting the promotion of domestic violence within advertisements for ground coffee. Which yes, is certainly crazy.