

THE PORTRAYAL OF BLACKS IN BUSINESS PUBLICATION ADVERTISING

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Blacks are becoming increasingly prevalent as industrial purchasers, managers, and entrepreneurs, and government statistics indicate that this trend will continue into the 1990's. Such increases mean that business-to-business marketers must develop communications that are capable of reaching and influencing the black segment of the industrial market. While there is little evidence to indicate that white members of the buying center are alienated by the presence of blacks in ads, studies have shown that blacks resent the way that they have been depicted in advertising. These feelings can be expected to have negative effects on black professionals' attitudes toward the products shown in such advertisements since industrial purchasing behavior is known to be influenced by emotional as well as rational considerations. This article reports the results of an analysis of business publication advertising over three decades. The findings show that the increase in the use of blacks leveled off during the decade of the 1980's and that there were some changes in the ways in which blacks were portrayed in such ads.

INTRODUCTION

Blacks are increasingly occupying positions as professional buyers, executives, managers and administrators in industry. From 1983 to 1987, for example, there was an increase of more than 30 percent, a 400,000 worker increase, in the number of blacks employed in managerial or professional occupations. In the executive, administrative and managerial ranks specifically, there was an increase of nearly 240,000 blacks, to about 6 percent of those employed in this capacity. By 1987, nearly 8 percent of purchasing agents were black, numbering more than 7,600 in comparison to about 4,200 in 1983. Further, there were almost 154,000 black sales supervisors and proprietors in this country in 1987, a more than 43 percent increase from 1983 (Statistical Abstract of the United States 1987, 1989).

These numbers mean that business-to-business marketers must develop marketing communications that are capable of reaching and influencing the black segment of the industrial market. And with the increase in efforts to stem the rising cost of industrial sales calls, business publication advertising is increasing dramatically (Hartley and Patti 1988). However, despite the recognition that the promotion medium can influence and shape attitudes (Cox 1970), marketers "have often lagged in adjusting their presentations to accommodate the revised professional variables involved in the sales/purchasing interface" (Guinipero and Zenz 1982). In order to determine to what extent industrial marketers have responded to these issues, the purpose of this study is to

examine changes in the frequency of appearance and role portrayals of blacks in business publication advertising over time.

BACKGROUND

Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of using black models when advertising to black consumers (for example, Zinkhan, Qualls and Biswas 1990; Stevenson and Stevenson 1988; Stearns, Unger and Luebkehan 1987), but there appears to be little research which considers the use of black models when advertising to blacks as industrial customers, and only two that specifically address the presence of blacks in industrial advertising (Stevenson and Paksoy 1981; Stevenson 1991). But, if research conducted on black consumers can be generalized to blacks in their increasingly prevalent occupations as industrial purchasers, black models may prove more effective in communicating with this growing purchasing segment. Since research has indicated that industrial purchasing behavior reflects both firm influences and individual motives, this assumption is plausible (Haas 1986).

In researching the black consumer market, Gibson (1969) and Choudhury and Schmid (1974) found that the use of black models in print ads may determine, to a great degree, who gets the black segment of the consumer market. Nevertheless, research on general magazine advertising indicates that even in recent years, a small percentage of magazine advertisements were using black models. Stearns, Unger and Luebkehan (1987) conducted a study of 1,175 ads in magazines published in 1982. They found that only 2.4 percent of the 1,175 ads studied employed black models. A study of three magazines by Humphrey and Schuman (1984) showed that 5.7 percent of the ads they analyzed in 1980 contained blacks. Ortizano (1989) analyzed 2502 ads in magazines published in 1986 and found that only 5 percent of the general audience

magazine ads depicted blacks. Zinkhan, Qualls and Biswas (1990) found that the percentage of ads portraying black models was 4.37 percent in 1986. With regard to the study of blacks in business publication advertising, Stevenson and Paksoy (1981) noted some increase in the percentage of ads depicting blacks, and the percent of ads depicting blacks in trade publications had increased to 10.6 percent in 1986 from 4.9 percent in 1966 (Stevenson 1991). The fact that the percentages of blacks was small is surprising because pressure from black interest groups to increase black presence and improve black role portrayal in ads has continued (Joseph 1986; Reiss 1983). Further, previous studies have shown that audiences do not object to visible minorities in ads and that there were "generally positive attitudes, rather than negative ones, toward advertising that contained black models" (Singer 1983). Petroschius and Crocker (1989) also concluded that the response toward ads containing blacks "has generally been found to be favorable" (p. 218).

Beyond the question of frequency of appearance of blacks in ads, qualitative portrayals have also come under scrutiny. Two qualitative issues are occupational portrayal and racial composition in ads depicting blacks. With regard to occupational portrayal, Cox (1970) found a change from unskilled occupational portrayal to skilled occupational portrayal from 1949-50 to 1967-68. Kassarian (1969) found that black occupational status in advertisements had increased from 1946 to 1965 and that those portrayed in professional, managerial, and clerical occupations had risen from less than one percent to nine percent over the 20 year period. Humphrey and Schumann (1984) found only 14 percent of blacks portrayed as laborers and Stearns, Unger and Luebke (1987) found that occupational skill level of blacks portrayed was no different than that portrayed by whites. In the case of industrial advertising, the one study that considered the occupations of blacks in trade journals found that there was a decline of blacks in blue collar portrayals and an increase in black professional portrayals from 1966 to 1986 (Stevenson 1991). In looking into the issue of racial composition in magazine advertising, Kassarian (1969) found a significant decline in mixed race non-peer ads and an increase in mixed peer ads over the period from 1946 to 1965. Humphrey and Schumann (1984) found that the percent of ads depicting blacks in mixed race peer settings had increased from virtually none in 1950 to 65 percent in 1980. Similarly, in trade publications the ads that depicted blacks in mixed racial peer settings increased from 43 percent in 1966 to 71 percent in 1976.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study extends previous work by investigating the quantitative and qualitative portrayal of blacks in general business publication advertising. The specific research questions addressed are:

- What is the frequency of black appearance in business publication advertising and has it changed over time?
- What are the occupations portrayed by blacks in business publication advertising and have they changed over time?
- What are the racial compositions in ads portraying blacks in business publication advertising and have these changed over time?

METHOD

The business publications selected for this study were *Business Week*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*. These horizontal business publications were selected for two reasons. First, they are among the most widely circulated of the general business publications with annual circulations in excess of 750,000. Second, they are read by business executives in a wide spectrum of industries because their content focuses on trends and issues of interest to such readers (Swayne and Stevenson 1987). All full-page advertisements were content analyzed in each of the publications for one issue of each quarter for the years 1957, 1967, 1977, and 1987. This provided a data base of more than 1000 ads. In the case of weekly or bi-monthly publications, the issue selected for inclusion was randomly selected to avoid bias. Content analysis (the systematic study of the copy, headline, visuals and creative theme of an advertisement) is well supported in advertising research (Kassarian 1969, 1977).

The first period analyzed, 1957, was chosen to provide a benchmark year prior to the growth of the black social movement and prior to the movement of greater numbers of blacks into managerial and ownership roles in business. Reexamining the publications at ten year intervals provided sufficient time for blacks to be assimilated into higher levels of business. It also allowed an opportunity to gauge the effect of the rapid growth of the civil rights movement in the 1960's, the changing political climates of the Ford and Carter years of the 1970's, and the Reagan presidency in the 1980's. Only advertisements including people were content analyzed. Drawings, cartoons, and pictorial advertisements not including people were disregarded. No attempt was made to control for regional variations in the publications nor for the duplication of advertisements either within or between publications. The review procedure for the selected advertisements included recording the number of people shown in the advertisement, the number of blacks, and the roles portrayed by blacks if one or more were present. This process is consistent with those used in previous studies (Cox 1970; Kassarian 1969; Shuey 1953; Stearns, Unger and Luebke 1987; Stevenson 1991). Frequency of black appearance was evaluated on two dimensions: percentage of ads containing blacks and blacks as a percentage of all people depicted in the ads. Roles were evaluated on two dimensions also, occupational portrayal and racial composition. Changes in frequency of appearance

TABLE 1
RELIABILITY OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Percentage Agreement</u>
Model race (all ads)	96.0
Model race (black ads)	93.0
Occupational role (black ads)	89.0
Racial composition (black ads)	86.0

and roles between periods were evaluated using difference of proportion tests. The occupational status of blacks was coded based on the categories developed by the Department of Labor (U. S. Department of Labor 1982). The categories used were occupational: blue collar; managerial/professional; entertainer; clerical; and non-occupational: family; recreational; other. The dimensions of role portrayal and racial composition were scaled as in previous general advertising studies (Kassarjian 1969; Stearns, Unger and Luebkeman 1987). Composition categories were: all models black; separate picture (panel ad; no blacks and whites in same scene); mixed non-peer (secretary and manager, for example); mixed peer (two clerical workers, for example).

As in any content analysis study, there is the potential for problems of accuracy and objectivity in gathering data. As suggested by Kolbe and Burnette (1991), several procedures were followed to enhance the accuracy and objectivity of data collection. One judge was responsible for the entire data collection process. The judge was trained regarding the coding scheme and the operational definitions used in the study. A pretest of the coder's accuracy was made using a *Business Week* issue not included in the study. The pretest showed compliance with accepted levels of reliability. The judge then independently analyzed all ads. Finally, a second judge randomly selected and analyzed approximately 12 percent of all advertisements included in the study and 100 percent of ads depicting blacks. The results of the interjudge reliability evaluation (shown in Table 1) exceed acceptable confidence limits (Kassarjian 1977).

FINDINGS

Appearance Frequency

During the 30 year period examined there were changes in the number of business publication advertisements portraying blacks (see Table 2). In 1957, only 3.1 percent of the ads portraying people depicted blacks; by 1967, the percentage was not significantly different at 3.6 percent. By 1977, a significant increase over the previous two decades was observed; the percentage had increased to 15.4 percent ($p <$

.001). Even in 1987, the percent of ads portraying blacks was still at 13.8 percent significantly higher than in 1967 ($p <$.001). Thus after an initial surge in the decade from the mid-1960's to mid-1970's, the percentage of black portrayals appeared to be holding constant at about 14 percent by 1987. The data were reanalyzed to consider the issue of how many blacks appear in ads in comparison to the number of people of all races in the ads, as shown in Table 3. To illustrate, if ten ads were analyzed and one contained a black, it would be indicated in Table 2 that 10 percent of the ads depicted blacks. But if the ten ads had contained a total of 20 people, only one being a black, the percentage of blacks would be 5 percent. The preponderance of minority presence studies have been conducted in the former manner, i.e., what was the percentage of ads containing blacks. Yet the criterion for frequency of appearance levels, according to the literature, has been that the proportion of blacks in ads should equal the proportion of blacks in the population (Humphrey and Schuman 1984; Wheatley 1971) perhaps more accurately demonstrated by the data in Table 3. There was a significant increase in the number of blacks in ads as a percentage of the number of people in the ads after 1967. In 1957, only one percent and in 1967 only 1.5 percent of the people portrayed in the business ads studied were blacks. By 1977, this percentage had increased to 6.1 percent ($p <$.001) and it further increased to 7.8 percent by 1987 ($p <$.001). Thus, when considered as a percentage of all people in ads, there was little change from 1957 to 1967 in black representation. A significant increase in black portrayals was observed between 1967 and 1977, and the increase continued into 1987.

The numbers of blacks in advertisements as a percentage of all ads and of all people in ads are shown in Tables 2 and 3 by magazine and year. There were no significant increases from the mid-1950's to mid-1960's in the number of ads portraying blacks or the number of blacks in ads. The mid-1960's to mid-1970's surge is evident in both tables, however, the increase in black business advertisements in *Forbes* was not significant until 1987 ($p <$.05). In *Fortune* and *Business Week*, by 1987 the number of blacks in ads had stabilized. In advertisements in *Business Week*, the mid-1970's surge was followed by a decline in the percentage of ads

TABLE 2
ADVERTISEMENTS DEPICTING BLACKS BY MAGAZINE AND YEAR

<u>Year and Magazine</u>	<u>Number of Ads Depicting People</u>	<u>Number of Ads Depicting Blacks</u>	<u>Percentage of Ads Depicting Blacks</u>
1957			
<i>Business Week</i>	129	2	1.6%
<i>Forbes</i>	24	0	0.0%
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>197</u>	<u>9</u>	4.6%
	350	11	
Mean:	$\frac{\text{Ads depicting blacks}}{\text{Ads depicting people}} = \frac{11}{350} = 3.1\%$		
1967			
<i>Business Week</i>	109	4	3.7%
<i>Forbes</i>	39	2	5.1%
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>103</u>	<u>3</u>	2.9%
Total	251	9	
Mean:	$\frac{\text{Ads depicting blacks}}{\text{Ads depicting people}} = \frac{9}{251} = 3.6\%$		
1977			
<i>Business Week</i>	97	23	23.7% ^c
<i>Forbes</i>	55	6	10.9%
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>94</u>	<u>9</u>	9.6% ^c
Total	246	38	
Mean:	$\frac{\text{Ads depicting blacks}}{\text{Ads depicting people}} = \frac{38}{246} = 15.4\%^{a,b}$		
1987			
<i>Business Week</i>	55	9	16.4% ^d
<i>Forbes</i>	78	12	15.4% ^d
<i>Fortune</i> Total	<u>63</u>	<u>6</u>	9.5% ^d
	196	27	
Mean:	$\frac{\text{Ads depicting blacks}}{\text{Ads depicting people}} = \frac{27}{196} = 13.8\%^b$		
a Mean percentage significantly different from previous 10 year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .001$. b Mean percentage significantly different from previous 20 year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .001$. c Proportion significantly different from previous 10 year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .05$. d Proportion significantly different from previous 20 year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .05$.			

depicting blacks (Table 2) but it still exceeded the 1967 level.

Occupational Roles

The occupational roles portrayed by blacks in each of the periods analyzed is demonstrated in Table 4. There were no significant changes in occupational portrayals from 1957 to 1967. There was an increase from nine to 50 percent ($p <$

.01) of blacks portrayed in managerial and professional roles from 1957 to 1977 with the 50 percent level maintained into the 1987 period. Conversely, blacks portrayed in blue collar occupations declined from 67 percent in 1967 to 21 percent ($p < .01$) and declined again in 1987 to 7 percent ($p < .01$). Portrayal of blacks in non-occupational categories did increase during the period from 1967 to 1987. Over the entire period of the study there was an increase from no blacks in non-

occupational roles to 15 percent in non-occupational roles ($p < .1$).

Racial Composition

The racial compositions depicted in ads using black models are shown in Table 5. Over the three decades studied there was little change in the racial composition of ads depicting blacks. The only changes of note ($p < .1$) during the period were an increase in blacks shown separately, from no such ads in 1967 to 18.4 percent of all ads viewed in 1977; and a decrease in mixed non-peer ads from 54.5 percent in 1957 to 22.2 percent in 1967. After 1957, the largest percentage category in each time period was mixed peer ads. Within publications, however, there were some shifts in racial composition portrayals. Advertisers using *Fortune* frequently (66.7 percent) and consistently portrayed blacks in mixed peer settings from 1967 on. Those using *Forbes* increased such portrayals after 1967, while those using *Business Week* remained fairly constant after 1967. After 1957, mixed non-peer ads were likely to occur in *Business Week* and highly unlikely to occur in *Fortune*; a significant ($p < .05$) shift from the high percentage of such ads used in *Fortune* in 1957. The use of separate pictures of blacks and all blacks in an ad, although varying among publications from period to period, increased from about 9 percent in 1957, staying at about one-third of all ads depicting blacks though the remaining three periods.

DISCUSSION

Appearance Frequency

After no significant change from 1957 to 1967, the increase in the use of blacks in business publication advertising that occurred between 1967 and 1977 suggests that marketers were becoming more responsive to the growing numbers of blacks in administrative and managerial roles and to the positive equal opportunity climate at the time. There was speculation in the 1960's and 1970's that a "white backlash" would occur if the frequency of appearance of blacks in ads were increased (Cagley and Cordozo 1970; Block 1972); but other studies raised doubt about such reactions (Bush et al 1979; Solomon et. al. 1976). It might even be argued that by 1977 the percentage of ads portraying blacks, 15.4 percent, was an overrepresentation in relation to the percentage of blacks in the general population and the even smaller percentage of blacks at managerial levels in business. But by the more rigorous standard of percentage of black people in ads, the increase from 1.5 percent in 1967 to 6.1 percent in 1977 although dramatic, still did not equal the 11.6 percent of blacks in the overall population at that time (Statistical Abstract of the United States 1978). Nevertheless, in comparison to the percentage of blacks employed in managerial and administrative roles at the time, 4.8 percent (Statistical

Abstract of the United States 1978), the 6.1 percent presence in business publication ads compared quite favorably and did little to support the "white backlash" theory.

By 1987, the percentage of ads depicting blacks had stabilized, but at 13.8 percent it exceeded the 12.2 percent of blacks in the general population and widely exceeded the percentages of blacks in managerial and professional occupations (6.2 percent). It also exceeded the 7.6 percent of blacks employed as purchasing managers. Even the more conservative measure of black advertising presence, the percentage of black people in ads, at 7.8 percent in 1987 compared favorably with statistics on blacks in professional (6.2 percent) and purchasing (7.6 percent) occupations as mentioned above. One explanation for this result is that business-to-business advertisers (using the publications examined in this study) were responsive to the changing role of blacks in business and were not negatively influenced by the less aggressive equal opportunity stance of the Reagan years.

In comparing these findings to those of the other study of general business publication advertising (Stevenson and Paksoy 1981), it too noted an increase in the percentage of ads depicting blacks. But in comparison to recent studies on consumer print media, the higher incidence of blacks in business publication ads suggests that business advertisers have a greater appreciation for the importance of a representative black presence than do consumer advertisers. Nevertheless, although the percentages of black portrayals were lower in general magazine studies, the percentages had increased from the 1960's and 1970's, which is consistent with the results described here.

Occupations

The occupations depicted by blacks in business publication advertising were found to have shifted away from blue collar portrayals over the four decades considered. The decline in such portrayals was offset by an increasing tendency toward managerial and professional portrayals and toward non-occupational portrayals. This tendency was consistent with that found in trade journal advertising (Stevenson 1991) and reflects the greater presence of blacks in managerial, professional and purchasing occupations cited in government statistics. In comparison to the consumer sector, Cox (1970) found an increasing tendency to portray blacks at higher skill levels. Another study concluded that the portrayal of blacks "tended to reflect middle-class surroundings and values" (Stevenson and Stevenson 1988) and Stearns, Unger and Luebke (1987) concluded that "advertisers have apparently been sensitive to the obvious variable of occupational role" (p. 201). Such conclusions are consistent with the findings of this study.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF BLACK APPEARANCE BY MAGAZINE AND YEAR

<u>Year and Magazine</u>	<u>Number of Ads People in Ads</u>	<u>Number of Blacks in Ads</u>	<u>Percentage Black People in Ads</u>
1957			
<i>Business Week</i>	339	2	0.6%
<i>Forbes</i>	116	0	0.0%
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>859</u>	<u>11</u>	1.3%
	1,314	13	
Mean:	$\frac{\# \text{ Blacks in Ads}}{\# \text{ People in Ads}} =$	13/1,314 = 1.0 %	
1967			
<i>Business Week</i>	380	7	1.8
<i>Forbes</i>	105	2	1.9
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>340</u>	<u>3</u>	.9
Total	825	12	
Mean:	$\frac{\# \text{ Blacks in Ads}}{\# \text{ People in Ads}} =$	12/825 = 1.5%	
1977			
<i>Business Week</i>	540	46	8.5% ^c
<i>Forbes</i>	184	6	3.3%
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>317</u>	<u>11</u>	3.5% ^c
Total	1,041	63	
Mean	$\frac{\# \text{ Blacks in Ads}}{\# \text{ People in Ads}} =$	63/1,041 = 6.1% ^{a,b}	
1987			
<i>Business Week</i>	129	11	8.5% ^d
<i>Forbes</i>	238	11	8.8% ^{c,d}
<i>Fortune</i>	<u>130</u>	<u>7</u>	5.4% ^d
Total	497	39	
Mean:	$\frac{\# \text{ Blacks in Ads}}{\# \text{ People in Ads}} =$	39/497 = 7.8% ^b	

a Mean percentage significantly different from previous ten year period, difference of proportion test; p .001.

b Mean percentage significantly different from previous twenty year period, difference of proportion test; p < .001.

c Proportion significantly different from previous ten year period, difference of proportion test; p < .01.

d Proportion significantly different from previous twenty year period, difference of proportion test; p < .01.

Racial Composition

The racial composition of ads depicting blacks in business publication advertising has changed little during three decades. There has been a decrease in the portrayal of mixed non-peer ads, but the decreases were small and after the 1957 to 1967 period, were not significant. This finding is consistent with that of Stevenson's (1991) concerning trade journal

advertising and Humphrey and Schuman (1984) who concluded that both consumer and business advertisers "portray blacks at work in equal status with whites (p. 563)."

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the frequency of appearance and roles of blacks in business publication

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL ROLES PORTRAYED BY BLACKS BY YEAR

Role/Year	1957		1967		1977		1987	
	#	(%)	#	(%)	#	(%)	#	(%)
Occupational								
Managerial and Professional	1	(9)	3	(33)	19	(50) ^b	14	(52)
Blue Collar	9	(82)	6	(67)	8	(21) ^{a,b}	2	(7) ^b
Clerical	1	(9)	0	(0)	7	(18)	4	(15)
Entertainer	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	3	(11)
Non-occupational:								
Family	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(3)	1	(4)
Recreation	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(3)	0	(0)
Other	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(5)	3	(11)
Total	11	(100)	9	(100)	(38)	(100)	27	(100)

a Proportion Significantly different from previous ten year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .01$.

b Proportion significantly different from previous twenty year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .01$.

TABLE 5
RACIAL COMPOSITION IN ADS DEPICTING BLACKS BY YEAR

Racial Composition/Year	1957		1967		1977		1987	
	#	(%)	#	(%)	#	(%)	#	(%)
Mixed Peer Ad	4	(36.4)	4	(44.4)	17	(44.7)	16	(59.3)
Mixed Non-peer Ad	6	(54.5)	2	(22.2) ^a	8	(21.1)	3	(11.1)
Separate Ad	1	(9.1)	0	(0.0)	7	(18.4) ^a	3	(11.1)
All Blacks	0	(0.0)	3	(33.3)	6	(15.8)	5	(18.5)
Total	11	(100)	9	(99.9)	38	(100)	27	(100)

a Proportion different from previous year period, difference of proportion test; $p < .09$.

advertising over three decades. Results suggest that the numbers of ads portraying blacks as well as the percentages of blacks in the ads have increased significantly since the decade of the 1950's, and in some periods have exceeded either the percent of population criterion or the percentage of blacks employed in professional, managerial and purchasing positions. Thus, at least for the publications analyzed here, it appears that industrial advertisers are aware of the importance of the black market and are sensitive to the concerns of this minority. The findings also suggest that business-to-business advertisers are sensitive to changes in the status of blacks in business. In 1957 and 1967, there were frequent portrayals of blacks in blue collar occupations, but portrayals in the 1970's and 1980's infrequently showed blacks in such roles. On the contrary, they were most frequently portrayed in managerial,

professional and clerical roles. Advertisers also appeared to be sensitive to how readers might react to mixed black and white portrayals in non-peer work situations and infrequently used such situations. An assessment of whether this will continue in the decade of the 1990's will require further study of business publication advertising. Moreover, study of additional business publications and further attention to the trade press is warranted. Such studies would provide relevant and more current benchmarks for meaningful dialogue among black interest groups and the marketing community. The fact that more dialogue regarding racial concerns is needed was clearly brought into focus by the recent Los Angeles riots. These events should further sensitize business advertisers to the importance of ethically sound and ethnically sensitive promotion, especially if the chosen target market includes minorities.

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