

Title:

Classic TV and the Commercials that Entertained Generations

Word Count:

727

Summary:

Some television commercials have become just as famous as the shows during which they were aired. The 1950s saw the dawning of television advertisements and produced some of the most memorable. This article discusses the types of products promoted on television during the 1950s and the techniques promoters used to get into classic television audience's hearts and minds.

Keywords:

classic television, classic tv show, classic television DVD, classic TV DVD, classic television commercials

Article Body:

The 1950s were arguably the golden age of television and many people of a certain age look back fondly at some of the shows of the time - "The Lone Ranger", "I Love Lucy" and "Gunsmoke". These shows were in black and white and were watched on a set that got its signal from a huge antenna on the roof, but they were loved just the same.

Almost as compelling as the TV shows themselves, were some of the commercials of the time. TV was still a novelty during the 1950s and companies were anxious to cash in on the new craze. Particularly popular were commercials for cigarettes, cars and state of the art kitchen appliances. And the average length of TV advertisements was around a minute - compared to the 30 seconds or less today.

Beer was also one of the products widely advertised on TV during the 1950s. At first, it was only late at night and never on a Sunday, so as not to offend anyone. During the early part of the decade, Blatz Beer became one of the beer industry's biggest advertisers, partly due to the company's sponsorship of the popular "Amos 'n' Andy" show.

One of the most instantly recognizable characters in television advertising at the time was Mabel. Mabel was a chirpy blond waitress who appeared on screen with a tray of Carling Black Label beer. Almost every Carling commercial featured the phrase that became famous - "Hey, Mabel, Black Label!"

Cigarette advertisements were commonplace during the 1950s - a big change from

television today. Some of the biggest tobacco manufacturers of the time spent a lot of money trying to convince us that smoking was sophisticated and fun, including Lucky Strike, Tareyton and Winston.

One famous Lucky Strike ad featured a clever combination of cartoon and live action, featuring the singer Gisele McKenzie. Tareytown had an ad that featured what appeared to be two children dancing around a giant pack of cigarettes. And who can possibly forget the Fontane Sisters singing the praises of Chesterfield cigarettes?

Car manufacturers went to great lengths to advertise the latest models on television during the 1950s despite the loss of aesthetic effect on a black and white screen. The Ford Edsel was advertised at great length as the most beautiful convertible in the world, complete with such wonderful and innovative features as "teletouch" driving and air suspension.

It wasn't all just cars, beer and tobacco. Some healthier products were advertised as well. One of the most well known ads of the era was for Pepsodent toothpaste. The TV ad featured a cute cartoon couple kissing after having brushed their teeth, and the catchy and unforgettable slogan - "You'll wonder where the yellow went, when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent!"

TV advertisements for kitchen appliances pointed out features that we now take for granted. A General Electric ad from the time for a new refrigerator consisted of a proud couple explaining the features of their sleek new fridge which included shelves that slid out, storage space behind the door and a separate freezer compartment.

And some things don't seem to have changed much over the years. Tupperware ran a series of TV ads during the 1950s which featured an exciting Tupperware evening at a typical suburban home, organized by a "hostess". Almost as much emphasis was placed on the social aspect, as on the actual features of the product.

One of the most prolific TV advertisers during the 1950s and subsequent decades was Pepsi. Their advertisements captured the feeling of the times like few others. One of the company's earliest featured the actress and singer Polly Bergen enjoying a barn dance and a refreshing glass of Pepsi-Cola.

Not to be outdone, Coca-Cola was just as prolific with their ads and came up with several memorable slogans, such as "There's nothing like a Coke". Coca-Cola also went after the young crowd, with an ad featuring people at diners and drive-in movie theaters and a jingle that claimed "Zing! What a feeling!"

Many television viewers firmly maintain that the advertisements are just as good

as the actual shows themselves! It seems as though that was especially true back in the 1950s. And if you just can't get enough of those old commercials, you can enjoy some of them on DVD or online.

~ Ben Anton, 2008