Contemporary pseudo-events: An analysis of the advertising in "Wired" magazine

Guy Joseph Schackman

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/1467

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
CONTEMPORARY PSEUDO-EVENTS: AN ANALYSIS
OF THE ADVERTISING IN WIRED MAGAZINE

by

Guy Joseph Schackman

Bachelor of Science
Loyola University, New Orleans
1986

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2002

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
UNLV

Thesis Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

November 13th, 2002

The Thesis prepared by

Guy Joseph Schackman

Entitled

Contemporary Pseudo-events: An Analysis of the Advertising
in Wired Magazine

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative

PR/1017-53/1-00

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
ABSTRACT

Contemporary Pseudo-Events: An Analysis of the Advertising in Wired Magazine

by

Guy Joseph Schackman

Dr. Dolores Tanno, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Communication
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The dot-com and technology boom of the mid-to-late 1990s captured the imagination of the public in both the way they thought about and invested in the future. This study looks at the role the advertising of Wired magazine played in promoting the dot-com boom. Daniel Boorstin (1987) claims that pseudo-events, or events that are manufactured, set society's expectations to levels that cannot be attained. This study examines 75 advertisements taken from issues of Wired published in 1995 and uses criteria outlined by Boorstin to determine if these advertisements are pseudo-events. Traits of the design of Wired magazine framed by Stewart Millar (1998) are used to examine the advertisements and relate them to the content of the magazine itself. This study found that the majority of the advertisements studied can be classified as a pseudo-event under Boorstin's definition and that the advertisements did share design traits in common with the magazine as a whole. These findings support the argument that Wired both contained pseudo-events and acted as a pseudo-event, which helped to heighten society's expectations during the mid-to-late 1990s.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................iii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................v

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................................vi

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................1
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................2
  Research Questions ....................................................................................................3
  Significance of the Study ..........................................................................................4
  Overview .................................................................................................  5

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE ....................................................................8
  Brief History of the Internet as a Commercial Enterprise .......................................8
  Pseudo-Events ..........................................................................................................16
  Advertising Content Analysis .................................................................................21
  Wired Magazine ......................................................................................................29
  Summary ..................................................................................................................32

CHAPTER III METHOD .................................................................................................34
  Content Analysis......................................................................................................36
  Criteria for Analysis.................................................................................................38
  Sample Selection and Data Gathering ....................................................................43
  Limitations of Method .............................................................................................47

CHAPTER IV RESULTS .................................................................................................49
  Boorstin's Appeals of Advertising ..........................................................................49
  Stewart Millar's Traits of Wired's Design ...............................................................60
  Examples ..................................................................................................................64

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION ...........................................................................................72
  Pseudo-events and Extravagant Expectations ........................................................72
  Implications ...............................................................................................................79
  Limitations ...............................................................................................................83
  Directions for Future Research ..............................................................................86
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................87

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................89

VITA.....................................................................................................................................94
**LIST OF TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Self-fulfilling prophecy</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Contrived</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Self-fulfilling prophecy</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Contrived</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I offer up great thanks to my parents, Mary Lou and Joseph Schackman, for supporting my decision to pursue a graduate education. Special thanks goes to my mother for pushing and encouraging me to finish my thesis and complete my graduate work. I would also like to thank my committee members and chair. Dr. Tanno, Dr. Kilker, Dr. Larson and Dr. Fontana all gave me excellent feedback during this process. They were also demonstrated great patience with the long distance nature of this particular project.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Communications technology has developed dramatically over the past quarter-century. The modern global telecommunications network, which includes the Internet, has given many Americans a non-stop information source. As the Internet has grown and become more accessible to the U.S. public, access to information has increased dramatically (Zakon, 2001). Many media outlets, most notably Wired magazine, have championed this trend as being not just evolutionary, but revolutionary. From their point of view, increased access to information will logically lead to a utopian world (Stewart Millar, 1998, pp. 13-14). However, others have warned against the trend of developing expanded access to information.

In 1962, Daniel Boorstin's book, The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America was published. In this book, Boorstin expresses his concern that our culture has become dominated by images, and that the constant flood of images made possible by technology has skewed our expectation of what the world can reasonably provide. To Boorstin (1987), the images which support and define these man-made events have shaped our culture's "extravagant expectations" (p. 5). Boorstin believes that the rapid pace of manufactured images and events help set our expectations for the future to excessively high—or extravagant—levels. Essentially, the public begins to expect that each consecutive pseudo-event—which Boorstin defines as an event created for the purpose of
being covered in the media—will outdo past pseudo-events. Expectations are raised for more dramatic news, bigger blockbuster films, and products that bring increased convenience (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 3-4). In the years since Boorstin completed his analysis, digital technology has only expanded our capacity to produce, distribute and consume information and images. The study of pseudo-events is as relevant now as it was almost forty years ago.

Beginning in 1993, Wired magazine targeted—and captured—an audience eager to be on the forefront of new digital technology and culture. Wired called this audience the "digital generation," a group of individuals who saw themselves as the driving force behind the next wave of new information technologies (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 71).

Having grown up consuming pseudo-events, Boorstin might argue that this was an audience with a built-in set of extravagant expectations for the information-rich future. In this study I hope to show that Wired magazine contributed to setting those extravagant expectations by examining the advertising content of the magazine.

Purpose of the Study

In The Image, Boorstin (1987) outlines in great detail the properties of pseudo-events and what they have in common with advertising. Despite an exhaustive search, I could not locate any detailed media analysis that incorporated Boorstin's theories. Although there has been a rapid increase in image production and dissemination techniques since The Image was published, Boorstin's theories apparently remain unapplied to modern media. Boorstin's book is a toolkit for analyzing the contemporary media landscape and deserves to be given a closer examination in this setting.
Wired magazine provides a good source for testing Boorstin's (1987) ideas within a contemporary framework. Wired is a recent periodical. It began publishing in 1993, a few years before the Internet started its considerable growth. The content of Wired went beyond objectively covering the rapid developments in telecommunications and technology. The editorial voice of Wired actively promoted a utopian vision of the near future where the technological developments it covered would lead to a better world (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 108). Wired was creating an image of a technological paradise for its readers, and in many cases setting up expectations in its advertising that couldn't possibly be fulfilled. What those expectations were, and how the advertising of Wired magazine functioned as a contemporary pseudo-event, are the general questions I will attempt to answer.

Research Questions

Several specific questions about Wired magazine and Daniel Boorstin's writings on pseudo-events will be addressed in this study. First, does the advertising in Wired exhibit characteristics of a pseudo-event according to Boorstin's (1987) definition of advertising? Boorstin claims that advertising exhibits four main appeals: the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the appeal of the half intelligible, and the appeal of the contrived (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 214-224). Applying his criteria of an advertising pseudo-event point-by-point to the advertising of Wired will help answer this question. Second, I hope to discover if the advertising in Wired contributed to Western culture's extravagant expectations in the mid-1990s. Finally, I hope to answer whether
Boorstin's theories are still relevant forty years after his original text was written, and if his work can be expanded and clarified.

Significance of the Study

Stewart Millar (1998) points out that the packaging and selling of information technology is a subject worthy of further research. This packaging is part of a "digital discourse" that stimulates demand for new digital technology (p. 24). Of studying Wired in particular, Stewart Millar notes that analyzing the content of the magazine is integral to understanding the discourse that is fostering the growth and interest in digital technologies (p. 69). My research into this area will perform two functions. First, in analyzing the advertising content of Wired magazine using the techniques developed by Boorstin (1987), I hope to shed some light on the beginnings of the digital culture and what factors gave rise to Wired's "digital generation." Not only can this increase the understanding of how pseudo-events are used to promote and perpetuate new ideas, but it will also answer Boorstin's call to "penetrate the unknown jungle of images in which we live our daily lives" (p. 261). Second, it will test the relevance of Boorstin's work in a new and modern context, which did not exist at the time of his original analysis. This last point is important because there has not been a study since The Image was published that applies Boorstin's thinking to modern media. Did pseudo-events only exist in the 1960s, or are they no longer part of the media landscape? If pseudo-events are more prevalent than they were when Boorstin first brought them to our attention, then his theories deserve to be validated so they can either be used again, discarded, or modified to suit another method of analysis. In addition, if Boorstin's theories help to reveal that the
advertising in Wired magazine did contribute to the culture's extravagant expectations in the mid-1990s, then they will be proven as a useful tool for further research into how pseudo-events shape cultural and economic trends.

Overview

Within the first few pages of Wired's January 1993 introductory issue, editor and publisher Louis Rossetto wrote to his new readership:

Wired is about the most important people on the planet today—the Digital Generation. These are the people who not only foresaw how the merger of telecommunications and the media is transforming life at the cusp of the new millennium, they are making it happen. (Wired 1.1, p. 10)

Rossetto goes on to proclaim to his readers—the "digital generation"—that they are in the midst of "social changes so profound, their only parallel is probably the discovery of fire." (Wired 1.1, p. 10). With these words, Rossetto and cofounder Jane Metcalfe began to target a new magazine audience, one that was not only interested in the latest telecommunications and computer technology, but also one that was in the position to evangelize and promote the growth of that technology (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 75). This last point is important, because Wired was about more than simply turning a profit. It was also concerned with promoting the growth of the digital economy. As Stewart Millar (1998) points out, the bulk of Wired's top-level editorial staff were associated with the Global Business Network, a consulting organization that is concerned with "influencing future directions in the economy in the interests of business" (p. 84). Hence much of Wired's contents are not simply reporting on recent advances and cultural uses of technology, they are editorializing a specific point of view that promotes the use of technology to build a better world. It is Wired's point of view that Stewart Millar
classifies under the term "digital discourse", which is "the specific language, text, talk, symbols and shared meanings that surround digital technologies and the new information economy" (p. 201).

In her analysis of Wired magazine, Cracking the Gender Code, Stewart Millar (1998) closely ties the advertising of Wired with its editorial contents. Of the relationship between the two, Stewart Millar (1998) states, "While the ads provide detailed product information and create brand name association, the editorials of Wired help to construct the image of the digital generation that creates and uses such products" (p. 81). She goes on to say that Wired's key advertisers represent a healthy cross-section of the computer and telecommunications industries—industries Wired encourages patronage of in its editorial pages. The relationship between the editorial and advertising content of Wired further validates the need to study the advertising of Wired in more detail. By studying the advertising of Wired, we can gain further insight into the digital discourse of its editorial content.

This relationship between Wired's writers, its advertisers, and its readers is one that is relevant to Boorstin's (1987) analysis of pseudo-events. One characteristic of pseudo-events (and advertisements) is that they are intended to be self-fulfilling prophecies (Boorstin, 1987, p. 12). Stewart Millar (1998) states that "Wired associates success in the new economy with the purchase and use of the latest high-technology products" (p. 77). By reinforcing and repeating that message, Wired ensured that its readers purchase the latest computer and telecommunications merchandise advertised within its pages. The digital lifestyle Wired promoted became "real" for the consumers of those products, even
though their lifestyle might have been perfectly adequate without the purchase of the latest high-tech hardware and software.

Using advertisements as tools for cultural analysis is nothing new. Erving Goffman's (1979) visual content analysis of advertising, Gender Advertisements, studied several hundred advertisements from major mainstream magazines. Goffman (1979) studied the poses of the models in the advertisements to come up with classifications on how gender is portrayed within the photographed scene. Later, Aspray and Beaver (1986) conducted a content analysis of computer advertisements. By treating these advertisements as historical documents, they discovered different ways computers had been marketed to businesses and consumers throughout the years (p. 142). In giving their reason for studying advertisements, Aspray and Beaver state that "advertisements have prov(en) to be valuable source material in the study of other areas of the history of technology" (p. 128). Aspray and Beaver show not only that the advent of new technology is primarily disseminated through advertising, but that advertising is a valuable resource in which to gain historical understanding of past cultural and technological events.

In conducting my own historical advertising content analysis, I will be examining advertising contained within Wired magazine during the year 1995 that is specifically related to technology products. That period of time saw a large growth in Wired's circulation and expansion (Stewart Millar, p. 76), so the advertisements contained within the issues for that year have a good chance of being representative of the growth and expansion of Wired's digital discourse.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brief History of the Internet as a Commercial Enterprise

Partially in response to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower created the Advanced Projects Research Agency (ARPA) in 1957. At the time, ARPA was set up as a civilian agency to consolidate all of the Pentagon's space research under one roof (Waldrop, p. 198). The military initially resisted this idea, but Eisenhower was explicit in demanding civilian control of this new research wing of the Defense Department, primarily to avoid inter-service squabbling over research budgets (Hafner and Lyon, pp. 19-20). The creation of NASA in 1958 served as a catalyst for the redefinition of ARPA's mission away from pure space research (Hafner and Lyon, p. 22). ARPA switched its focus to cutting edge scientific research—working with scientists at the nation's top universities (Hafner and Lyon, p. 22). The redefined ARPA would later become a key component in the construction of the Internet when it began to delve into computer research.

In the mid 1960s, Paul Baran of the RAND Corporation came up with a solution to the Pentagon's worries that a nuclear strike could destroy the nation's military communications system (Sterling, 1993). Baran's innovation was packet switching, a method of digitizing information and breaking it up into packets which could be sent in discreet units to their final destination (Zakon, 2002). The packet switching research
Baran completed in August of 1964 was exhaustive. The work totaled eleven volumes, covering everything from routing algorithms to estimated construction costs (Waldrop, p. 276). Baran's idea was well ahead of the actual technology to required to implement it, so the packet switching concept sat undeveloped for several more years.

ARPA had been dabbling in computer research since the early 1960s. However, when Robert Taylor became director of ARPA's Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO) in 1966, he proposed setting up an experimental network which would allow scientists to share computer resources more effectively. His proposal to link the defense research community together was quickly approved that year (Hafner and Lyon, pp. 41-42). By 1969, ARPA used Baran's theory of packet switching to build a network between UCLA, the Stanford Research Institute, the University of Santa Barbara and the University of Utah—the ARPANET (Zakon, 2002). The original ARPANET used separate, specially designed computers—"interface message processors", or IMPs—to handle the sending and receiving of data (Hafner and Lyon, p 75). The IMP units were connected to the telephone system by standard telephone wire, although AT&T did supply equipment at each node of the network to handle the high-rate data streams (Hafner and Lyon, p. 114). Although the initial impetus to build the network may have been to advance research and computer science interests, Waldrop (2001) states that ARPANET also served the continuing need for a network that was immune to a nuclear attack (p. 279).

In the early 1970s, Robert Kahn of Stanford began research to turn the ARPANET into an open system—a network of networks. Up until this time, the ARPANET had been a closed system with a single operator. Adding a node to the network required expensive
programming resources and time (Waldrop, p. 377). Waldrop (2001) argues that this open network of networks was a potent idea:

…it would be open to anyone willing to deal in the common currency and/or speak the common language as defined by the interface standard. It was this architecture of openness that would enable the Internet to undergo its explosive growth in the 1990s when it would expand from a handful of users to uncounted tens of millions in less than half a decade" (Waldrop, p. 378).

One of the keys to the open network system—the "internetwork" (Cassidy, p. 17)—was developing a universal protocol, in which all messages moving on the network shared. In 1974, the standard protocol for the Internet—the TCP/IP standard—was codified by Kahn and Vincent Cerf. (Zakon, 2002). The Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) was the "wrapper" in which messages were placed in before being sent. The Internet Protocol (IP) was the system which made sure the data arrived at the proper location (Waldrop, p. 379). In 1983, the ARPANET officially switched over to the TCP/IP protocol. Hafner and Lyon (1996) state that the switch of the ARPANET to TCP/IP was one of the most important events in the development of the Internet. "After TCP/IP was installed, the network could branch anywhere; the protocols made the transmission of data from one network to another a trivial task" (Hafner and Lyon, p. 249).

By the late 1980s, there were over 150,000 registered addresses on the Internet and over 800 networks connecting millions of computers. (Cassidy, 2002, p. 18). These networks had a variety of purposes and were not all dedicated to academic or military research. The USENET (meaning "User's Network") was started in 1979 as a highly decentralized network which, "supports only one basic service, news, a distributed conferencing service" (Quarterman, p. 235). Corporations, private individuals and
academic institutions made use of USENET for communication (Quarterman, p. 235).
The AMPRNET, or Amateur Packet Radio Network was set up by amateur ham radio
operators to transmit data via radio using the TCP/IP protocol (Quarterman, p. 285).
PeaceNet was founded in the fall of 1995 to offer conferencing services and e-mail with a
focus on the peace movement (Quarterman, p. 382). The UUCP network was named after
its transport protocol, the Unix to Unix Copy Program. It was started in 1978 as a dialup
network—each call to access the network connected directly to another host on the
network. The network was very decentralized and provided only e-mail services
(Quarterman, p. 251). These are only a few examples of networks which were primarily
set up for purposes other than research.

However, using the Internet successfully was largely relegated to those involved in
research at academic institutions—individuals to whom access to the original ARPANET
was initially intended. Those involved with the Internet at that time were generally
computer savvy individuals who knew how to operate the systems necessary to gain
access to the Internet. Those individuals generally had to have some experience with the
Unix operating system and the complexities of TCP/IP (Cassidy, p. 52). The Internet
could be a powerful tool, but it required special skills to access and use.

Tim Berners-Lee of CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research)
recognized this problem. His solution was the World Wide Web, which he invented in
1991 for research purposes. This new system sat on top of the Internet and consisted of
three elements:

(1) A computer language for formatting hypertext files, which Berners-Lee called
Hypertext Markup Language (HTML); (2) A method of jumping between files,
which Berners-Lee called the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP); (3) A unique
address code attached to each file that could be used to call up any file on the web instantly. (Cassidy, 2002, p. 19).

Berners-Lee later compared the World Wide Web to a market economy: "In a market economy, anybody can trade with anybody and they don't need a market square to do it" (Cassidy, 2002, p. 21). Cassidy (2002) labels this statement by Berners-Lee prophetic because it foreshadowed commerce on the Internet. In order for the Web to develop into a commercial entity, it had to become more accessible. CERN, Berners-Lee's employer, made this possible by not charging royalties to use its World Wide Web protocols. Cassidy notes, "this farsighted move created a global electronic commons where people could come together, talk, play, and before too long, buy refreshments" (Cassidy, 2002, p. 22). This vision became one step closer to reality when in 1991 Stephen Wolff, Director of the Division of Networking and Communications Research and Infrastructure (NCRI) at the U.S. National Science Foundation, proposed shutting down the government owned NSFNET (which was restricted to education and research traffic) and replace it with commercially owned networks (Cassidy, 2002, p. 23). NSFNET was founded in the early 1980s by the National Science Foundation as a way to get more universities connected to each other. The cost of adding ARPANET nodes was high, and to use ARPANET, the university had to be involved in defense related research for the government (Hafner and Lyon, p. 242). NSFNET opened the research network to a wider audience of universities. Even though NSFNET expanded access, Wolff believed that the Internet should move out of the sphere of government control and into the hands of private enterprise (Waldrop, p. 462). Early attempts by Wolff to interest the national telecommunications companies in taking over NSFNET were futile—they did not see any economic value in the Internet at the time (Waldrop, p. 463).
Wolff instead edged NSFNET towards privatization by decentralizing its management. He created regional networks operating as not-for-profit Internet providers to the research community (Waldrop, p. 463). In time, funding shortages forced these regional networks to accept commercial customers. They became the first Internet service providers (ISPs) (Waldrop, p. 463). At this point, users outside of the academic research community could sign up with one of these regional networks to gain access to the Internet.

The new ISPs flourished, but complaints began to surface that NSFNET management was being anti-competitive in the manner in which it awarded its contracts. In response, Congress passed a law in 1992 opening NSFNET wide open to for-profit access (Waldrop, p. 464). A few years earlier, in 1989, ARPANET had been merged into NSFNET (Hafner and Lyon, p. 256). The World Wide Web, and by extension, the Internet, went completely private on April 30, 1995 when the NSFNET was permanently shut down (Cassidy, p. 24).

From that point forward interest in the Internet and the World Wide Web as economic entity were a result of several events and ideological points of view coming together at the right time. On the consumer electronics front, IBM introduced its Personal Computer (or PC) to the public in 1981. The subsequent cloning of PC hardware by competitive manufacturers made the machines affordable to millions (LaMorte and Lilly, 1999). By 1991 over 65 million personal computers were in the hands of consumers (LaMorte and Lilly, 1999). The owners of these machines were prime candidates to embrace a new communications medium. Equally as important was the emergence of the Mosaic and Netscape Navigator web browsers, which made using the World Wide Web as simple as...
pointing and clicking a mouse. When Mosaic was introduced by Marc Andreessen in 1993, fewer than one percent of Internet users were on Berners-Lee's World Wide Web (Cassidy, p 52). By the spring of 1995, over three million copies of Netscape Navigator (the successor to Mosaic) were in use, and the World Wide Web accounted for over 25 percent of all Internet traffic (Cassidy, p. 64). Much of the credit for that increase was due to the free distribution of trial copies of Netscape Navigator. The trial copies were essentially free for 90 days, after which the registration fee for continued use of the software was thirty-nine dollars (Cassidy, p. 64). In the summer of 1996, Microsoft corporation contributed to the popularity of the World Wide Web by announcing that its Internet Explorer 3.0 browser would be available to the public for free. A few months earlier, America Online—a major commercial online service—began promoting and shipping the free Internet Explorer as its default Web browser. Microsoft also began including Internet Explorer with Microsoft Windows, thereby putting the browser within reach of millions of consumers (Cassidy, p. 106). The combination of inexpensive computer hardware and ubiquitous free browser software opened the World Wide Web—and the Internet—to a wide audience.

Cassidy (2002) also argues that the fall of the Soviet Union led to increased emphasis on the importance of free markets and technological innovation as keys to economic success (p. 26). This, in combination with a strengthening bear market in the 1980s and the invention of the 401(k) savings plan (which made the stock market accessible to millions of average Americans) led to widespread investment in technology and Internet companies (Cassidy, 2002, p. 28-30). By the late 1990s, freshly minted companies with weak business plans and executives with little or no experience were extracting millions
of dollars in funding—more often than not only because they were going to conduct business exclusively on the World Wide Web (Cassidy, p. 235). It can be argued that at this point in time, investors and business owners alike had what Boorstin (1987) would call "extravagant expectations" for the current and future technological economic climates.

The Internet is not the first technology that ushered in a period of overstated optimism and growth. In his book, The Victorian Internet, Standage (1999) writes, "Victorians believed the telegraph would eliminate misunderstandings between nations and usher in a new era of world peace" (Standage, p. 207). He writes that the telegraph was the first technology to be seen as a cure for the ills of the world, but certainly not the last. Electricity was heralded as an end to manual work and a creator of abundance and peace (Standage, pp. 210-211). Similarly, the airplane was expected to "foster democracy, equality, and freedom; to improve public taste and spread culture; to purge the world of war and violence; and even give rise to a new kind of human being" (Winner, 1997, p. 1001).

The telegraph also saw a period of explosive growth, which changed the way people lived their lives. In 1846 the telegraph system in the United States spanned 40 miles. By 1850, there were over 12,000 miles of telegraph wire connecting the country (Standage, p. 58). This growth changed the way people communicated, received their news, and how they did business. In a precursor to the digital generation's fear of being left out of the "wired" world, the telegraph quickened the pace of business to such a degree that business people had to use the telegraph—or risk losing out to their competition.
(Standage, p. 166). Not quite extravagant expectations yet, but it can be argued that this era cultivated an appetite in Americans for ever better and faster access to information.

In the 1920s, there was a boom in another fledging technology: radio. RCA, or Radio Company of America, was valued at one and one-half dollars per share in 1921. As the radio phenomenon swept the nation the stock soared, reaching a plateau of 570 dollars per share in 1929 (Cassidy, p. 70). Cassidy (2002) points out that during this time RCA never paid dividends. After the market crash of 1929, it took RCA thirty-five years to recover the value it had reached in 1929 (Cassidy, p. 70).

The electronics boom of the 1960s, which was linked to the space race (Cassidy, p. 70), is a further reminder that the Internet boom was not an isolated event, but part of a long line of speculation and enthusiasm over the latest advances in technology. However, the perceived commercial potential of the Internet led to unique phenomena as the average American directly investing in the stock market (Cassidy, p. 118), and MBA programs offering courses on how to manage a successful IPO (Cassidy, p. 235). Like the booms of the past, such enthusiasm—"extravagant expectations" in Boorstin's words—would have to eventually plateau.

Pseudo-Events

Early work regarding the creation and identification of pseudo-events was done by Edward Bernays (1923) and Walter Lippman (1922). Bernays (1923) offered examples and instructions on planning events that were solely intended to be reported on in his text Crystallizing Public Opinion. He gives an example of a hotel holding an event to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary. The "event" is created so that the press will cover it and
consequently publicize the hotel (p. 169). Lippman's book, *Public Opinion*, foreshadowed the pseudo-event by calling attention to the role of the publicist in shaping events for mass consumption. Lippman notes,

Were reporting the simple recovery of obvious facts, the press agent would be little more than a clerk. But since, in respect to most of the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not at all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone should wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspapers to print. The publicity man does that (pp. 344-345).

However, Daniel Boorstin was one of the first critics who pointed out how modern culture seeks out—and in many ways prefers—images over reality (Sanes, 2001). In his book, *The Image*, Boorstin (1987) argues that the modern world is filled with what he called pseudo-events—events that do not naturally occur, but are created in order to be witnessed and/or covered in the press. The NTC Mass Media Dictionary attributes the word pseudo-event to Boorstin and defines it as follows: "manufactured news that is used to gain publicity for the person or cause of the event" (Ellmore, 1991, p. 469). Fogelson (1989), comparing pseudo-events to non-events, elaborates on the nature of a pseudo-event. To Fogelson a pseudo-event is defined by an "agreement that an event had transpired, that something happened, but there is a disagreement as to the significance of and consequences following from that event" (p. 142). A common pseudo-event is the press—or news release. The news release is primarily news that has been constructed strictly for promotional purposes (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 18-19). Boorstin defined four basic characteristics of a pseudo-event. One, it is not spontaneous, but planned. Two, it is created for the purpose of being reported on or reproduced. Three, a pseudo-event's relationship to reality is ambiguous—did the event really happen, and what were the motives behind it? Four, a pseudo-event is usually intended to become a self-fulfilling...
prophecy—by stating something as fact, it eventually becomes fact (pp. 11-12). Boorstin elaborates on the non-spontaneous, manufactured nature of a pseudo-event in further detail. He claims that when a pseudo-event and a spontaneous event are presented to the public, the pseudo-event will tend to dominate because:

1) Pseudo-events are designed to be dramatic.
2) Pseudo-events are planned for dissemination so they are easier to disseminate and to make vivid.
3) Pseudo-events can be repeated at will.
4) Pseudo-events cost money to create, so they are advertised and repeated.
5) Pseudo-events are planned for intelligibility. Hence, they are more intelligible and reassuring than natural events.
6) Pseudo-events are more sociable, more conversable, and more convenient to witness. Their occurrence is planned around convenience.
7) Knowledge of pseudo-events—of what has been reported, or what has been staged, and how—becomes the test of being 'informed'.
8) Pseudo-events spawn other pseudo-events in geometric progression (pp. 39-40).

Boorstin's (1987) essential claim is that modern society's expectations are completely out of proportion with reality, and it is the dominance of the pseudo-event that has caused that to happen. He is not simply describing a term—he is genuinely concerned about the implications of the spread of pseudo-events: "By harboring, nourishing and ever enlarging our extravagant expectations we create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves. And which we pay others to make to deceive us" (Boorstin, 1987, p. 5). Funkhouser and Shaw (1990) echo Boorstin in their study of how synthetic experience affects contemporary American society. They hypothesize that the growing preoccupation with synthetic experience—in which they include visual media—has reinforced the heightened expectation that problems will be solved quickly and that media representations of reality will increasingly approach perfection (Funkhouser and Shaw, 1990, p. 82-83).
Boorstin wrote *The Image* in the middle of working on his three volume epic, *The Americans*. *The Americans* is Boorstin's exhaustive history of how the culture and ideas that formed the United States took shape. In *The Americans* many ideas are found which are echoed in *The Image*. Diggins (1971) shows that Boorstin believed that early Americans expected society to be held together by not ideas but things and that those Americans "preferred to flee outward to the world of action and things" (p. 115-116). After the Civil War, Americans were also brought together by what Boorstin calls the "consumption community" (Diggins, 1971, p. 116). The mail-order catalog, the department store, and advertising bound Americans together by "a mutual interest in standardized objects and things" (Diggins, 1971, p. 116).

Diggins (1971) also points out that Boorstin believes the genius of Americans was in the way they dismissed any difference between facts and values. Values (or what should be, rather than what is) were a given to Boorstin's early Americans (Diggins, 1971, p. 154). Not much thought was devoted to ideals in Boorstin's America. Diggins speculates that this "givenness" of ideals has led later generations of Americans to place great trust in "what is" and hence crave the pseudo-event (p. 115). Diggins asks, "Without a sense of reality, how can Americans be expected to distinguish the image?" (p. 115).

Other researchers have put the ideas in *The Image* to use in their own work. Smith and Hawkes (1972) identified a communication structure known as a "fiddle". A fiddle is a device "used by individuals and groups to facilitate communication and adhesion" (Smith and Hawkes, 1972, p. 26). Orchestral fiddles are large scale events used to promote interaction in a large group. Examples would be church dinners and homecoming games (Smith and Hawkes, 1972, p. 31-32). Smith and Hawkes say that the
orchestral fiddle is related to the pseudo-event, but unlike the pseudo-event, orchestral fiddles do not mask their importance (p. 32). Smith and Hawkes model the orchestral fiddle after the pseudo-event, but modify it to suit their specific needs.

Harms and Kellner (1991) in their survey of critical advertising theory find that the use of text in advertising has declined since the turn of the century, and that the use of illustrations and photos have increased (p. 44). They use this finding to verify the claim by Boorstin that contemporary society is placing an ever higher emphasis on the importance of images (Harms and Kellner, 1991, p. 44). Stritch (1972) draws a distinction between Boorstin and Marshall McLuhan. He states that while McLuhan proposed that technology would lead to a "Global Village", Boorstin counters that the immediacy of technology helps to splinter the sense of community (Stritch, 1972, p. 212). To Boorstin, when each individual has access to personal media channels, there is less reason to share in group experiences. Interestingly, the founders of Wired magazine named McLuhan their "patron saint".

Boorstin's study of pseudo-events is relevant to the study of Wired magazine, and how Wired went about selling an image of a high-technology future. Stewart Millar (1998) points out that Wired was very good at creating a demand for technology products (p. 81). In a 1994 interview about The Image, Boorstin elaborated on the subject of technology and how it relates to pseudo-events: "To multiply its product without regard to the need for the product is in the nature of technology" (Sheinbaum, 1994). Boorstin (1978) had developed this idea further in The Republic of Technology, his essay on the implications of America's technological society. He notes of the relationship between
technology and advertising, "Working together, technology and advertising create progress by developing the need for the unnecessary" (p. 9).

Advertising Content Analysis

Early work analyzing magazine advertisements was done by Courtney and Lockeretz (1971), and Venkatesan and Losco (1978). Both studies focused on the subject of women's portrayal in magazine ads. The studies examined stereotypes of women in print advertising, with both finding fewer stereotypes than expected. These studies were both early validators of the relevance of using advertising for social research.

Goffman (1979) conducted an early visual content analysis of advertising images. His book Gender Advertisements analyzed the composition of dozens of ads selected "at will from newspapers and current popular magazines" (Goffinan, 1979, p. 25). He placed the advertisements into groups that fit themes related to female gender. These groups are relative size, the feminine touch, function ranking, the ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal. For each of these groups Goffman found that in the advertising he studied, women appear smaller than men; women use their hands more than men; women outrank men in domestic settings; women are frequently shown in subordinate positions; and that women show more emotion (pp. 28-84). Goffman's study into how gender is portrayed in advertising paved the way for future visual content analysis and validated the importance of examining advertising in order to gain insight into larger cultural issues.

Other relevant research on content analysis of advertising was conducted by Williamson (1984). In Decoding Advertisements, she conducts a both a content analysis
and a semiotic analysis of contemporary advertising. Her main argument is that advertisements not only exist to sell products, but to create "structures of meaning" (p. 12). Products that are essentially very similar to each other (soap, coffee, etc.) are given, through advertising, personal meaning to the consumer buying the product. In her study, she made several observations that tie directly into Boorstin's thinking. She noted that advertising describes products as a substitute for the unattainable, or as Boorstin would say, "extravagant expectations" (Williamson, 1984, p. 38). Williamson also points out that advertising sets up a structure where consumers and the goods consumers are sold become interchangeable for one another. In the world of advertising, people can become identified with products—for example, 'the Pepsi People' (Williamson, 1984, p. 13). In the case of Wired, Stewart Millar (1998) noted that the magazine strives to cultivate an image of the "digital generation" that uses certain products (p. 81). "Wired" individuals in the editorial pages and in the advertising are "wired" because they use certain tools that pertain to that lifestyle. The products they use help identify them as part of the "digital generation." This ties into Boorstin's (1987) observation of self-fulfilling prophecies. Wired sells to a "digital generation" that is such because it buys certain "digital" products.

An early analysis of technology advertising was Aspray and Beaver's (1986) study of computer advertisements in popular magazines over a thirty year time period between 1950 and 1980. Aspray and Beaver stopped short of labeling their research a content analysis and instead branded it a pilot study. They did this because going into the study, they were unclear about what categories and themes might emerge from the data (Aspray and Beaver, p. 129). This study uncovered three distinct stages in the history of computing that were related to how computers were understood within the wider culture.
(Aspray and Beaver, 1986, p. 142). By analyzing the content of thousands of
advertisements over their selected time period, Aspray and Beaver identified three stages
of computing: the computer as calculator, the computer as information processor, and the
computer as white collar office assistant (pp. 130-131). This three-generation model is
based on the perceived uses and understanding of the computer in each time period
studied. (Aspray and Beaver, 1986, p. 142). The results of Aspray and Beaver's research,
while important, are not as relevant to this study as is their justification and methodology.
Their research shows that studying advertisements is relevant to uncovering trends and
patterns in historical subject matter relating to technology. Aspray and Beaver give
several reasons for examining advertising to study the dissemination of computer
technology. First, advertising is the primary way consumers learn about new technology.
Second, advertising reveals what features the sellers of the technology thought were
important to consumers. Third, successful advertising showed consumers what they
wanted to see (pp. 127-128). My analysis will examine not only what Wired's advertisers
were selling, but how the way they were selling it helped set the extravagant expectations
of Wired's readership.

Manca and Manca (1994) examined the images of men in 1980s magazine
advertisements. The study focused on "men's fantasies about who they are and who they
would like to be" (Manca and Manca, 1994, p. 111). In the resulting analysis, Manca and
Manca found that ads geared towards men in the 1980s encouraged indulgence and
instant gratification (p. 130). In their study, they identify several types of men, including
"the yuppie", who was "portrayed as an easy-going man in his twenties and thirties,
successful in his career, affluent, and a sophisticated consumer" (p. 125). Manca and
Manca go on to say that advertisements featuring yuppies incorporated utopian themes (p. 130), and often involved technology (p. 128). These themes identified in the advertisements of the 1980s carry over into the content and advertising of Wired in the 1990s.

As mentioned earlier, much of Stewart Millar's (1998) analysis of Wired centers around advertising. While she primarily analyzes Wired's advertising to highlight the gender stereotypes that it promotes (which she uses to further her thesis that Wired's technological present and future is male-dominated) she addresses other issues related to Wired's advertising in the process. (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 102). Early on in her study, Stewart Millar makes a strong connection between the editorial and advertising content of Wired: "Wired is selling the future and a big part of that future involves satisfying the consumption needs of computer and telecommunications industry elites" (p. 81). Given that, she later makes several observations about the content of Wired, which can be applied to the advertising in the magazine. First, she notes that the layout uses elements of a computer user interface, complete with windows and lists. Second, the color palette of Wired uses very little 'natural' color. Few earth tones are used in the magazine, giving it an artificial, unnatural quality. Third, most of the photographs used in Wired have been digitally altered, which Stewart Millar suggests emphasizes the digital generation's power over reality. Finally, Wired features heavy use of computer imagery in its pages—cables, wires, circuit boards, and terminal screens (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 91-94). In analyzing the advertising of Wired I will not only be using Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising as a criteria, but I will also use the observations above to point out the common themes between the content and the advertising of Wired where appropriate.
Stewart Millar (1998) also uncovers other issues at work in the advertising of *Wired*. She finds that an underlying theme in much of *Wired*'s editorial content and advertising comes in the form of a threat: "get online (or 'wired') or get left behind" (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 80). I believe that this underlying threat helps contribute to the tendency of *Wired* to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy. "Unwired" readers became "wired" by following developments in the magazine and participating in commerce with its advertising partners for fear of being left out of the digital generation.

Boorstin argues that contemporary experience can be studied through the lens of advertising (Pollay, 1986, p. 24). He sees advertising as a "touchstone of our changing concept of knowledge and reality" (Boorstin, 1987, p. 211). Boorstin (1987) contends that advertising is a type of pseudo-event (p. 214) and as such, can point to the creation of extravagant expectations—or expectations which in reality cannot be met. He highlights four main appeals of advertising: The appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the appeal of the half-intelligible, and the appeal of the contrived (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 214-224). These appeals will be used to analyze the advertising in *Wired* magazine, and the exact characteristics of each will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

Boorstin's appeals of advertising share traits in common with other scholars' thoughts on advertising. In a review of the advertising theories of social science and humanities writers, Pollay (1986) found that Heilbroner, Henry and Skornia agree that advertising consists of "incomplete information, half-truths or careful deceptions" (p. 22), which is in concert with Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the neither-true-nor-false. Boorstin (1987) argues that advertising which exhibits the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, contains
statements that are designed to be credible and do not state a fact (p. 214). Pollay also discovered that both Lasch and Mannes believe advertising plays to fears, anxieties and insecurities (p. 22). Galbraith and Leiss contend that advertising advocates "consumption [as] the route to happiness, meaning, and the solution to most personal problems (Pollay, p. 22). Lasch and Mead agree that advertising, "idealizes the 'good life', but that the 'good life' is perpetually dissatisfying" (Pollay, p. 22). All three of these theories of advertising—playing to fears, advocating consumption to find happiness, and the chasing of the good life—tie into Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. One aspect of that appeal promises a future shaped by the product itself. In this case, advertising is essentially a never-ending cycle of promises.

Pollay (1986) expands on this notion of advertising being a perpetual promotion for a utopian state-of-mind: "The intent of advertising, especially in the aggregate, is to preoccupy society with material concerns, seeing commercially available goods or services as the path to happiness and the solution to virtually all problems and needs (p. 21). Lasch (1978) echoes this argument. He contends that advertising, "seeks to create needs, not to fulfill them, [it generates] new anxieties instead of allaying old ones ... by fostering grandiose aspirations, it also fosters self-denigration and self-contempt" (p. 180).

In an analysis of tobacco ads spanning 20th century history, Leiss et al (1986), argue that contemporary ads are simply images, which "convey a range of attributes ... to be associated with the product" (p. 202). A few decades earlier, McLuhan (1953) made a similar observation. "To use a use a brand of car, drink, smoke or food that is nationally advertised gives a man the feeling that he belongs to something bigger than himself. He is
part of a process or a culture that contains and nourishes him" (p. 555). The contemporary advertising Leiss et al (1986) studied is essentially vague and open to interpretation. Leiss et al argue that advertisers connect with consumers by relating their products to abstract, symbolic values (Harms and Kellner, p. 45). This analysis agrees with Boorstin's (1987) advertising appeal of the half-intelligible. Advertising which exhibits this appeal will contain vague descriptions of the product being advertised, which does not clearly describe the function of the product (p. 223-224). These "symbolic values" can also be rendered on the advertising page using improbable or fantastic scenes. These advertisements exhibit Boorstin's appeal of the contrived. The creators of advertising often have to resort to images of the fantastic in order gain the attention of consumers.

Boorstin's appeals of advertising can be viewed as methods advertisers use to persuade consumers, but it is not the only such model. Rank (2002) outlines a straightforward method for analyzing the pattern of persuasion in advertising. Rank suggests that successful advertising will elicit the following five responses in a viewer. One, it will get their attention. Two, it will build their confidence. Three, the ad will stimulate the viewer's desire. Four, it will stress urgency, or the need to buy the product immediately. Finally—and most importantly—the ad will stimulate a response resulting in the sale of the product. Rank calls these elements the hidden superstructure or the "deep structure" common to all ads. Rank's theory presumes that the five elements above can be found in all professional, commercial advertising. Using Rank's patterns of persuasion on the advertising of Wired magazine may identify the ads as successful, commercial ads, but that much could be presupposed. It may even help uncover some of the particular themes which appealed to Wired's readership. However, Rank's categories
cannot determine whether a particular advertisement, or the majority of *Wired*'s advertisements are pseudo-events. Boorstin claims that the dominance of the pseudo-event in modern society has raised the expectations of what society can provide to levels which are out of proportion with reality (p. 5). By using Boorstin's appeals of advertising in analyzing the ads of *Wired* magazine, I hope to measure whether or not the expectations of the "digital generation" were set to extravagant levels in the pages of *Wired*.

It is tempting to view any analysis of advertising as a snapshot, or a moment frozen in time. Rose (2001) asserts that a weakness of visual content analysis is that it almost exclusively focuses on the composition of the image, and says little about how the image was made, or who the image was made for (p. 56). The German philosopher Wolfgang Haug, in his writings on advertising, goes beyond analysis of the image itself. Harms and Kellner (1991), in studying the work of Haug, assert that "like Boorstin, Haug emphasizes the importance of image and appearance in contemporary society, and reveals how they are connected to the sales effort and to the capitalist political economy" (pp. 48-49). Haug's essential claim is that the manipulative nature of advertising images is an organic by-product of the capitalist system. In a capitalist system, corporations are driven to maximize profits by any means necessary—which forces them to persuade consumers to purchase products they could essentially live without (Harms and Kellner, p. 49). Therefore, Haug argues that advertising has a long-term impact on consumer thought and behavior, unlike the magic bullet or hypodermic communication theories which state that messages directly shape short-term behavior (Harms and Kellner, p. 50). Leiss et al (1986) seem to agree with this point of view when they write, "advertising is not just a
business expenditure undertaken in the hope of moving merchandise off the store shelves, but it rather an integral part of modern culture" (p. 7). When these theories are taken into account, the idea that Wired was shaping its readers' extravagant expectations for the future through its advertising gains validity.

Wired Magazine

Several scholars have analyzed the culture of Wired magazine and reflected on its contents, agenda and vision. Keith White observes that Wired works by manipulating its readers' fears of being left out of the digital revolution, and that no matter how hard they try, they can never be ahead of the curve (White, 1995). As such, White (1995) suggests that Wired's primary goal is to "facilitate the moving of product by the technology industry". To White (1995), Wired is essentially a lifestyle guide which is in complete touch with what its readers' want. However, in presenting to them what they want, at the same time it makes them feel uncomfortable for not already having it. Finally, White recognizes that Wired magazine promotes a utopian vision of a future where technology is the cure for all the world's ills.

Langdon Winner offers a reminder that Americans have routinely looked to technology to improve their lives and solve their problems. In recent years computer and telecommunications technology has held this promise, but Winner (1995) notes that in the early part of the 20th century, "Americans widely expected the airplane to foster democracy, equality and freedom; to improve public taste and spread culture; to purge the world of war and violence; and even to give rise to a new kind of human being" (p. 18). Winner (1997) notes that throughout American history, any new technology brought the
promise of "universal wealth, enhanced freedom, revitalized politics, satisfying community, and personal fulfillment" (p. 1001). According to Winner (1997) Wired magazine promotes that digital technology will bring similar utopian promises to fruition (p. 1001). In pushing this technologically utopian vision, Wired rarely comments negatively on technology or the uses of technology (Winner, 1995, p. 19). Instead, technological progress is constantly seen as something necessary for survival in the digital age. In a passage that echoes White's (1995) observations, Stewart Brand remarked in the pages of Wired that "technology is rapidly accelerating and you have to keep up. Networks and markets instead of staid old hierarchies, rule, and you have to keep up" (Winner, 1997, p. 996). This comment by Brand ties into Boorstin's (1987) view of the pseudo-event as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Writing on Wired's contents, Keegan (1995) makes the observation that "the magazine makes the future look like a terrifying, disorienting place," and by not reading Wired you'll be helpless to make sense of that future (p. 39). White (1995) and Winner (1997) contend that Wired uses fear to engender readers' loyalty—so they continually "keep up" with digital technology. Winner (1995), commenting on Wired's penchant for promoting utopian technological dreams makes an important connection between Wired's editorial philosophy and Boorstin's writings on pseudo-events. Winner (1995) writes, "selling glitz, glamour and ideological vaporware, Wired joins a grand tradition in American history, one that prefers fantasy over fact, illusions of a better world over any conscious effort to create one" (Winner, 1995, p. 20). This echoes Keegan's assertion that Wired "makes the digital revolution a self-fulfilling prophecy, both illuminating this new subculture and promoting it—thus creating new demand for digital tools, digital toys, digital attitudes" (p. 40).
Melanie Stewart Millar's (1998) study, Cracking the Gender Code, is an exhaustive content analysis of Wired from within a feminist framework. Stewart Millar's book directly challenges the worldview presented in the pages of Wired. In this study she argues that Wired promotes the development of technological advancements that serve only a fraction of the population; that the technological universe Wired advocates is almost completely male dominated; that the contents of Wired contain a high percentage of vague, blanket statements about the future; and that Wired has had an impact on the mainstream press—both in its unbridled optimism of technology and its masculine orientation (pp. 174-175). Stewart Millar focuses her analysis both on the content and the advertising of Wired. Much of Stewart Millar's analysis of Wired's advertising is in the vein of Goffman (1979) in which she points out the specific gender relationships within the ads (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 100). However, her advertising analysis reveals interesting similarities with Boorstin (1987). One immediate connection with Boorstin are the parallels that Stewart Millar draws between the content of Wired and the content of women's fashion magazines. She states: "Fashion magazines consistently privilege the artificial over the 'real' and attempt to create images of the self that can only be achieved through consumption" (p. 77). This observation is directly connected to Boorstin's theory of pseudo-events being artificial stand-ins for real events and how society has come to prefer the artificial over the real.

In her research into Wired, Stewart Millar (1998) identifies a trend in popular culture, which she identifies as "digital discourse." She highlights Wired as being one of the key contributors to that discourse. Digital discourse, according to Stewart Millar, popularizes technology at the same time it sells technology (p. 24). This discourse is "intense and
dazzling, and, perhaps more than any other discourse of our times, is infused with a hyperactive sensibility" (p. 35). Other characteristics are its "discontinuity, speed, symbolic and linguistic spectacle, (and) the tendency to exaggerate the novelty of the present" (p. 35). While Stewart Millar deconstructs digital discourse to examine its ideology and political implications toward gender (p. 24-25), her descriptions do show that digital discourse shares similar features with Boorstin's (1987) characteristics of advertising—such as being half-intelligible and contrived. In addition, Pollay (1986) finds that advertising, by definition, is in tune with the culture that spawned it (p. 32). While "advertising reflects cultural values, it does so on a very selective basis, echoing and reinforcing certain attitudes, behaviors and values far more frequently than others" (Pollay, 1986, p. 33). Therefore, it can be argued that digital discourse, as a part of the culture Wired magazine was helping to create, naturally found its way into the advertising of the magazine.

Stewart Millar's (1998) description of digital discourse not only intersects with Boorstin's (1987) thinking on advertising and pseudo-events, it will be useful in examining and analyzing the advertising content of Wired.

Summary

Boorstin (1987) identified pseudo-events as manufactured events, which contributed to the tendency of Americans to continually expect more from modern life—what he called extravagant expectations. Advertising was one of the products of our culture that Boorstin identified as contributing to those expectations. Stewart Millar's (1998) analysis of Wired identifies studying the magazine's advertising contents as being important to
pinpointing the voice and rhetoric of the magazine as a whole, or its digital discourse.

Finally, scholars recognize that the study and examination of advertising is an important tool for understanding cultural history and trends.

While there have been studies which analyze advertising content, there have been none that specifically use Boorstin's (1987) description of advertising as a pseudo-event as a tool for examination. By adapting Boorstin for an analysis of Wired's advertising, I will both directly apply his theories on advertising to modern print advertisements, and gain further insight into what expectations Wired's advertising set up in the mind of its readers. The next chapter goes into detail on the method that will be used to achieve this objective.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

The method I am using to conduct a qualitative analysis of *Wired* magazine’s advertising will follow from Aspray and Beaver’s (1986) exploratory analysis of computer advertising and Manca and Manca’s (1994) analysis of images of men in 1980s magazine advertisements. Aspray and Beaver viewed over 10,000 advertisements that spanned a thirty-year period (p. 129). They selected 1,500 for further study by sampling magazines at five-year intervals, and narrowed that down to a handful for inclusion in their paper. They did not conduct a detailed content analysis of each advertisement they selected, but instead sorted them into categories and summarized their observations. Aspray and Beaver’s study is covered in the previous chapter, but to reiterate, they identified three stages of computing in their analysis: the computer as calculator, the computer as information processor, and the computer as white collar office assistant (pp. 130-131). Aspray and Beaver make it clear that their research into computer advertising was a pilot study. They make this distinction because they did not know the categories and themes that the ads would fall into before beginning the study (p. 129). Since computer technology changed so quickly over the 30 year time period they studied, similar words and images took on different meanings in ads separated by many years making categorization difficult (Aspray and Beaver, p. 129).
Manca and Manca's (1994) analysis followed a method similar to Aspray and Beaver's (1986). They gathered a sample of 335 advertisements, sorted them by what "type" of male image they contained using techniques pioneered by Goffman (1979), then selected a representative sample of advertisements to analyze in greater detail within the pages of their study (Manca and Manca, 1994, pp. 113-114). Manca and Manca also clearly point out that their analysis of advertisements is not a strict content analysis. Although they organized their data into categories, they state that, "our findings are tied to our own particular—and inevitably subjective—reading of the advertising page" (p. 113). The types of male images they identified and examined in their research were the family man, the loner, the man's man, the playboy, the playful youth, the proud worker, the gent, and the yuppie. Manca and Manca examined the ads based on three levels of "awareness" they felt the reader might be responding to: the spoken (the explicit content), unspoken (the subtle meanings) and unspeakable (the unconscious meanings), with the bulk of the analysis focusing on the spoken and unspoken aspects of the ads (p. 114).

These studies were chosen as models because of the way they combined quantitative content analysis and analysis of the latent content contained within the data. In formulating a method for this study, it became clear that it would be necessary to gather and sort data to determine patterns, but it would also be necessary to make subjective interpretations about the meaning of the latent content—the images and text—during the analysis itself. Like Aspray and Beaver (1986) and Manca and Manca (1994), I will analyze a sizable sample of advertisements, and then select a few to highlight for a detailed written analysis. Unlike Aspray and Beaver, I will choose categories in advance, I will group the data into categories by looking at the implicit meanings within the data in
a qualitative fashion, much like the method Manca and Manca used to analyze their data. Although my study will not employ content analysis in the strict quantitative sense of the term, and will use more qualitative, subjective methods, I will outline the key concepts of content analysis prior to describing what aspects of its methodology this study will incorporate.

**Content Analysis**

Berelson (1952) defines content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). He notes that content analysis can establish valid inferences between content and its effect (p. 18). Bowers (1970) points out that "to generalize that inferences can be made and to assert ... that inferences are validly made are two different claims" (p. 291). In other words, content analysis can help make connections between physical content and its meaning, but it cannot guarantee this. Krippendorff's (1980) definition of content analysis is similar: "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (p. 21). Echoing Berelson, Krippendorff believes that content analysis is a method to understand the symbolic and cultural qualities of texts (Rose, 2001, p. 55).

Bowers (1970) provides a guide to the steps involved in performing content analysis. First, general hypotheses are formulated. Second, the sample of messages to be analyzed is selected. Third, categories and units for analysis are derived. Fourth, judgmental procedures are formulated, if necessary. Fifth, if needed, a control group of messages is selected. Sixth, the general hypotheses are reformulated in terms of the categories and units. Seventh, criterion are selected for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses, Eighth, the
results are tabulated, and finally, the criterion are applied (p. 293). Bowers points out that these steps do not necessarily occur in the exact order outlined above.

One of the critical steps in performing content analysis is selecting the sample to be analyzed. To narrow the scope of a study, a sample of a larger data set is usually taken. Weber (1985) makes the point that an important part of choosing a sample is to keep data that will yield interesting and useful research results, while at the same time reducing the amount of data that needs to be analyzed (p. 41).

There are both advantages and disadvantages of content analysis as a methodology. Bowers (1970) suggests that an advantage of content analysis is that it "guards against distortion by selective perception" (p. 292) by introducing a systematic rigor to what could be open to interpretation. Other advantages of content analysis are voiced by Weber (1985). He points out that content analysis "operates directly upon text or transcripts of human communications" (p. 10), and that content analysis can be successfully used to describe trends in communication content (p. 9).

Weber (1985) also points out a disadvantage in using content analysis as a methodology. There are inherent reliability problems in reducing a complex text or image to a small group of categories. This is usually due to ambiguity in interpretation of both the content and the categories themselves (p. 15). He suggests multiple human coders to boost reliability (Weber, p. 15). Rose (2001) points out another disadvantage of content analysis, specifically related to the analysis of images. She states that content analysis "breaks an image into parts and has no way of handling any interconnections that may exist between its parts, other than by statistical correlation" (p. 66). She also points out that content analysis of images, by definition, focuses on the image itself. It therefore has
little value in analyzing how images are produced, and what audience eventually views them (p. 56).

This weakness leads Rose (2001) to call for interpretation after content analysis is complete. To her, content analysis "is a technique the results of which need interpreting through an understanding of how the codes in an image connect to the wider context within which that image makes sense" (p. 65). Hence, she suggests taking into account three aspects of an image when subjecting it to analysis. First, the technological aspects, or how the image was made should be factored in to the analysis. Second, the compositional aspect, or how the image is organized should be considered. This second aspect is what Rose claims most content analysis already takes into account. Third, the social aspects should be analyzed, "the social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used (p. 17). According to Rose, content analysis and qualitative methods are not mutually exclusive (p. 55).

Studying the technological aspects, or how the advertisements in Wired magazine were physically produced, I am considering outside the scope of this study. The details of magazine production and printing are not necessary to answer the research questions posed. However, this study will focus on the compositional aspects of Wired's advertisements, and use qualitative, interpretative methods to analyze the social aspects of the advertisements.

Criteria for Analysis

For this study, I chose advertisements from Wired magazine from the year 1995 as my sample. I chose that particular year because it represented a period of time when
Wired's growth was particularly explosive. Between January 1993 and August 1995, the magazine grew by 346 percent (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 76). During this early period before the dot-com boom, Wired was building an audience, gaining a foothold into the culture, and honing its digital discourse. In these early years of its existence, Wired was setting its readers' expectations for the remainder of the 1990s.

Wired ran advertising for many products, not just those related to technology. For the purpose of this study, I will only focus on technology-specific advertising. This includes advertisements for computer hardware, software and peripherals, and technology related services (for example: Internet access and consulting). While all of the advertising contained in Wired is worthy of study, the technology advertising in particular is directly related to Wired's digital discourse and the raising of extravagant expectations in its readership.

As the main criteria for analysis, I used Boorstin's (1987) four appeals of advertising: the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the appeal of the half-intelligible, and the appeal of the contrived (pp. 214-224). In The Image, Boorstin illustrates each of these appeals as follows.

For the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, Boorstin (1987) gives the example of Schlitz Beer advertising that it sterilized its bottles using steam. Schlitz failed to point out that all of its competitors also steam-sterilized their bottles as well. Boorstin notes: "What is called for in these advertising situations is less a verifiable fact than a credible statement. The credibility cannot exist without the 'truth'; the seduction cannot exist without the 'falsehood'" (p. 215).
Boorstin (1987) illustrates the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy by examining the celebrity endorsement. He points out that it is common for either the celebrity endorser to become a celebrity by virtue of endorsing the product (the company creates the celebrity), or by an actual celebrity becoming a user of the product due to the fact that they were given the supply of the product as part of their payment. "The successful advertiser is the master of a new art: the art of making things true by saying they are so" (Boorstin, 1987, p. 216).

Advertisements for soap that promise 'round-the-clock protection', and for pens that write underwater, and for an automobile that has a 'hydro-matic drive' are examples of the advertising appeal of the half-intelligible. Boorstin (1987) claims: "The very obscurity of advertising language proves that manufacturers are really at work for our benefit—developing new processes, discovering, perfecting, and adding mysterious new ingredients, elaborating subtle and complicated new features ... the half-intelligibility of what we see and read and hear encourages us to hope that our extravagant expectations may be coming true" (p. 223).

The appeal of the contrived is illustrated in advertising examples of living room furniture set out on a well-manicured lawn and of a man hunting while chained to a giant egg (Boorstin, 1987, p. 224). There are countless examples of fantastic, improbable scenes laid out in popular advertising. Of this appeal, Boorstin notes: "Like the little girl pleased to see her best beau stand on his head for her sake, we delight in the headstands and handsprings of advertisers ... because we are delighted that anyone would go to such trouble for us" (p. 224). Boorstin ties these appeals together by noting that there has been
a "shift in common experience from an emphasis on 'truth' to an emphasis on 'credibility'" (p. 212).

These appeals are used to determine if the advertisement under scrutiny fits Boorstin's (1987) definition of an advertisement, and if it can be classified as a pseudo-event. The design properties of *Wired* magazine that have been outlined by Stewart Millar (1998) are used as additional criteria for analysis. All the ads are subjected to a test for the following design properties. One, the use of elements of a computer user interface which includes windows and lists. Two, the absence of natural color, giving the ad an artificial look. Three, the use of digitally altered photographs which symbolize the digital generation's power over reality (pp. 91-94). The last design element Stewart Millar mentions, the use of computer devices such as cables, wires, screens and other accessories will not be analyzed since it is assumed that a majority of *Wired*'s technology advertisements will naturally contain those elements. I will use these criteria by Stewart Millar to determine the visual similarity between the advertising and content of *Wired*.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boorstin (1987) asserts that the rise of the pseudo-event in contemporary society has created extravagant expectations within the society (p. 5). By analyzing the advertising of *Wired* magazine within the framework of Boorstin's appeals, I hope to test whether *Wired* inflated the expectations of its readership by outlining a world that could never live up to those expectations. Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of *Wired*’s design will be used to link the content and advertising of *Wired*. If her traits are present in the advertising, then a link can be established between the ad and the content—the digital discourse—of the magazine. If the magazine and the content show a strong linkage using Stewart Millar's method, a connection can be made to the
results of the analysis using Boorstin's appeals. For example, if the results of the analysis using Boorstin's appeals show that the advertising in Wired did contribute to an amplification of their readers expectations, one could argue that the entire magazine also did—if Stewart Millar's traits of Wired's advertising are present as well.

In analyzing the advertisements, I looked for each of Boorstin's (1987) appeals in the following parts of the ads: the visuals, the headlines, and the body copy. The visuals consist of the photography, the illustrations and the overall design. The headlines are the large, prominent, attention grabbing copy, usually consisting of just a few words. The body copy is smaller, longer, and usually positioned below the headline. These logical segments were chosen more for their organizational value than to uncover any particular meaning, although they were selected in an attempt to cover the content of the entire ad.

When analyzing the visuals of each advertisement, I will also note which of the design elements identified by Stewart Millar (1998) is present.

Specifically, for each of Boorstin's (1987) appeals, I noted of the following sub-components which form the foundation of the appeals. For the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, I analyzed the advertisements for any non-factual, or ambiguous statements and slogans. These statements are designed to only be credible, and do not state a fact (Boorstin, 1987, p. 214). When looking for the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy in the ads, three sub-components will be taken into account. First, if the ad contains statements that imply a threat of being left behind or left out of the "wired" generation if the product being advertised is not purchased. Second, if the ad promises a future that will take shape once the product is purchased, and third, if the product is endorsed by a celebrity (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 216-217).
The appeal of the half-intelligible is present in the advertisements under study in two possible ways. One, if the ad contains vague descriptions of the product that do not clearly describe the function of the product. Two, if the ad contains descriptions of the product performing tasks that the consumer did not know it could perform (Boorstin, 1987, pp. 223-224). Boorstin's final advertising appeal, the appeal of the contrived will be tested by looking for statements or visuals in the ads that have a frenetic and disjointed feel to them. These frenetic statements would also link the ads to Wired's digital discourse. The appeal of the contrived would also be apparent if there were statements or scenes that are improbable or fantastic (p. 224-226).

I will also identify when an element from an advertisement in question does not fall into one of the categories above, when the element falls into more than one category, and when it does not follow Stewart Millar's (1998) advertising design criteria.

Sample Selection and Data Gathering

For this analysis, I gathered 75 advertisements from five separate issues of Wired from the year 1995. The issues used are February, May, August, October and December. These particular issues were chosen in order to span the entire year and get a representative sample for the entire year, rather than simply select the first five sequential months of the year 1995.

Approximately 15 images were chosen from each issue using a systematic sampling technique (Rose, 2001, p. 58). This technique involves selecting a sample at a predetermined interval. Because some issues had fewer pages than others, those issues yielded fewer images. Other, larger issues yielded more images. Both two-page and
single-page advertisements were gathered. Starting at the front of each issue, I selected advertisements approximately every ten pages. This ten page interval was used to both select the target number of images in each issue, and to get as random a sampling of advertisements as possible. There were several limitations to the randomness of this the selection process. First, there wasn't always an advertisement every ten pages—occasionally there were more pages between ads. For instance, where the bulk of the editorial content is located in each issue, there are no advertisements. The position of the editorial section varied between issues, but on average it ran for approximately fifty pages. Second, I did not select advertisements previously captured in other issues if they presented themselves again using the method outlined above. In these cases, I would move on to the next available advertisement in each issue which I had not previously captured.

The 75 advertisements used for this study were photographed using a digital camera so they could be examined at length. No special setup was employed to photograph the advertisements. The issues were opened to the appropriate pages and photographed by positioning the camera above them. The photographs were later cropped to the borders of the actual ads and visually optimized using Adobe Photoshop. References to the images were placed into an HTML photo gallery. The images and the HTML pages were then uploaded to a web server for easy access during the analysis phase.

Before performing the analysis on the advertisements, I constructed a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel to capture the results of the analysis. The spreadsheet design consists of a column for each of the following: the image number assigned by the digital camera when the photograph was taken, the issue the advertisement was taken from, the page
number(s) of the issue where the ad is located, a brief description of the advertisement, the headline copy in the ad, each of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising, Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired magazine's advertising, and a summary of the analysis for each image.

In this Excel spreadsheet, the columns to record the presence of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising were laid out in the following manner. Each of the four appeals—the appeal of the neither true-nor-false, the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the appeal of the half-intelligible, and the appeal of the contrived—were given a section in the spreadsheet. These sections were further subdivided by applying the sub-component of each of Boorstin's appeals. The individual columns—the units for analysis—were arrived at by further subdividing the sub-component of each appeal into three categories: the visuals, the headline, and the body copy for each ad. Three columns were also added to record the presence of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired's advertising: frenetic visuals, lack of natural color, and digitally altered photographs. The final result was twenty-seven columns for recording the details of the analysis.

As the advertisements were analyzed, a note was made in each column to whether or not each of the above sub-components was found in the image. If an item matching one of the sub-components was found, a short explanation of how that sub-component applied to the advertisement was entered into the spreadsheet. If a particular sub-component did not apply, or was not found, the words "Not found" were entered into that cell. As was noted earlier in this chapter, although every attempt was made to keep the recording of Boorstin's (1987) appeals and Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of design as objective as possible, this analysis was by nature a qualitative process in which
interpretation was necessary to break down the latent components of the ads and code them into the spreadsheet.

After the analysis of the advertisements was complete, ten additional columns were added to the Excel spreadsheet. These columns were designed to summarize and condense the results from each advertisement. Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising and their sub-components were used for the column headings, but unlike the bulk of the spreadsheet, each section was not broken down to the level of visual, headline, and body copy. Instead, those discreet parts of the ad where an appeal was found were recorded in a uniform manner to allow sorting and analysis of the data. For example, if an advertisement exhibited the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false in both the headline and the body copy (based on a reference to the initial analysis) the words "Headline.Body" were recorded below that section. If no appeal was recorded, the words "Not Found" were used. A similar treatment was given to the column that summarized Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired's advertising. For example, if an advertisement had little natural color and used altered photographs, the words "Color.Photo" were recorded in that cell. This particular coding was used to take advantage of the Autofilter sorting feature in Microsoft Excel. The advertisements could now be sorted and sub-sorted by advertising appeal, or lack thereof.

The final column in the Excel spreadsheet recorded the number of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising found in each advertisement. If even one of the sub-components of an appeal had been recorded, that appeal was recorded as being found in this column. A number from zero to four was recorded in this column, depending on how many appeals were found in each advertisement. This column—using the Autofilter feature mentioned
above—also allowed the entire spreadsheet to be sorted by how many appeals were recorded for each ad.

Limitations of Method

This method outlined above for analyzing the advertising of Wired has limitations. First, a detailed analysis of each technology advertisement from one year of Wired magazine as presented above is outside the scope of this study. Particular advertisements were chosen for detailed analysis, while the bulk will be subjected to a coding method where the criteria above will be noted if they are present, or not present. Second, as mentioned above, not all of the advertising in Wired will be considered for this study, only advertising related to technology products. This excludes ads for automobiles, apparel, cosmetics, and other similar products. This also excludes Wired's own in-house advertising, which could conceivably warrant a study of its own. The non-technology ads and Wired's house ads could either reinforce or refute the findings produced by this study.

This method is designed to examine the argument that the presence of Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits help connect the advertising of Wired to its editorial content, and any pseudo-events found using Boorstin's (1987) definition to the magazine as a whole. The limitation inherent in this connection is that this study is not taking into account the editorial content of Wired. To reach a more concrete conclusion regarding the magazine as a whole, a future study would have to take into account all of the magazine's content.
Although this study uses qualitative methods for interpreting the sample of ads, it did have a component where data was gathered and placed into a spreadsheet for analysis. According to Weber (1985), the ambiguity of word meanings and category definitions can result in distortion when analyzing the sample (p. 15). There was also only one individual performing the analysis on this study. According to Weber, one coder results in the weakest form of reliability—the results are unlikely to be replicable if performed by another researcher (p. 17).

The remainder of this study will focus on the results obtained from analyzing the advertising of Wired magazine, and what the implications of those results are. I expect to find that the majority of Wired's advertising does fit Boorstin's (1987) definition of advertising and pseudo-events. I expect to provide concrete examples of what extravagant expectations those advertisements promoted to the readership of Wired. Hopefully, this analysis will give some insight to the dawn of the digital culture and what influences spawned Wired's "digital generation." I also expect to test Boorstin's theories on advertising and pseudo-events against a contemporary, timely subject. I hope to find Boorstin's conclusions on the rise of images and pseudo-events to be fully validated when applied to the content of Wired magazine.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results gained from the method described in the previous chapter will now be outlined in detail below. Each of Boorstin's (1987) appeals, and the sub-components of those appeals will be examined as they relate to the 75 advertisements used in this study. It is beyond the scope of this study to describe each of the 75 advertisements in depth, but examples are provided when needed to illustrate a particular appeal or sub-component of an appeal. I will also be describing Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of advertising and which of those traits are found in the advertisements studied. Particular examples of these traits in ads are also provided. In addition, to demonstrate the complete process of analyzing the ads, I will give a detailed analysis and description of two advertisements—one which demonstrates all four of Boorstin's appeals, and one in which none of the appeals were found.

Boorstin's Appeals of Advertising

Of the 75 advertisements analyzed using the method outlined in the previous chapter, 55% (41) exhibited all four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising, 27% (20) exhibited three of the advertising appeals, 17% (13) exhibited two of the appeals, and less than one percent (1) failed to show any of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising.
The appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was found in each of the 41 advertisements which exhibited all four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals. This appeal was found in the visuals, the headline and the body copy of 19 of these ads. For example, an ad for "Hooked: Internet Made Easy" from the February 1995 issue of Wired features a human arm supporting the Earth, the claim "Internet Made Easy" in the headline, and the statement "Hooked has the other services beat hands down" in the body (Wired, February 1995, p. 37). None of these images or statements are true or verifiable—they are only credible. The appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was found in both the visuals and body copy of eight of the ads which contained four appeals. For this subsection of ads, the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was more often found in combination with other elements of the ad than not. This appeal was found alone in the visuals in only three of these ads. In an ad for City University's online MBA program, web pages and computer screens are pictured a large as the average person, which is not factual. The headline and body copy however, were straightforward—"Now you can get an MBA on the WWW." (Wired, August 1995, p. 95). The appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was found alone in the body copy in only two of the ads, and alone in the headline in only one ad (see Table 1).

The strongest sub-component of the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy was that of a promising future. Thirty-eight advertisements which exhibited four appeals were found to promote a promising future, with the majority of those ads demonstrating that trait in the body copy and the headlines. For example an ad for Sprint contains the headline "The future of communications: 100% digital—1000% simpler." The body copy reads "The world's first future friendly network..." (Wired, February 1995, pp. 18-19). Only one of
Table 1

Four of Boorstin’s appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of ad</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

these ads promoted the future strictly in the visuals of the ad. By contrast, only three of the ads which exhibited four appeals featured a celebrity. One of these ads featured a celebrity endorsement in the headline, and two featured a celebrity endorsement in the body copy. In an advertisement for IBM’s Quest for Fame game, the rock group Aerosmith plays a central role in the action. The body copy reads "In order to join the rock band Aerosmith, you’ve got to get good enough with the virtual pick..." (Wired, December 1995, p. 137).

Eighteen of the 41 advertisements which included the four advertising appeals implied a threat of being left out of the “wired” generation if the product was not purchased. This implication of threat is the third sub-component of the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. A threat was implied the body copy of eight ads where it was found. This sub-component was only found once strictly in the visuals and once strictly in the headlines of the ads which featured all four advertising appeals (see Table 2). An ad for Virtual I-O Glasses displays the implication of threat in the visual portion of the ad. The ad features a
boy wearing virtual reality glasses while using a game controller. Lightning and other visual effects surround the individual (Wired, February 1995, p. 75). The implication is that "wired" individuals take part in this unique experience—if you don't wear Virtual I-O Glasses, you could be left out.

Table 2

Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Self-fulfilling prophecy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Perception of threat</th>
<th>Future promised</th>
<th>Celeb. Endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>5 12%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>8 20%</td>
<td>9 22%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>5 12%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>3 7%</td>
<td>12 29%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>3 7%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>4 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>23 56%</td>
<td>3 7%</td>
<td>38 93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>41 100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>41 100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>41 100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of vague or ambiguous statements is a sub-component of the appeal of the half-intelligible. All 41 of the advertisements which exhibited four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals contained vague or ambiguous statements. These statements were found in the combination of the visuals, the headline and the body copy of 16 ads, and in the visuals and the headline of 14 additional ads. An example of an ad which contains this subcomponent in each section is for a product called Video OnLine. The visuals of the ad show a television set behind a man with a mouse cord in his teeth. The product logo is displayed on the television screen—which says nothing about the product. The headline
reads "Between Europe and America there is no wider door." The body copy of this ad reads in part, "Video OnLine is the door in and of Europe" (Wired, May 1995, pp. 86-87). Each of these examples is vague, ambiguous and unclear. Vague and ambiguous statements were rarely found in isolated parts of these advertisements. Two ads had examples of vague or ambiguous statements in only the visual portion of the ad, and examples of these statements appeared in the headline or the body copy only once each (see Table 3).

Table 3

Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Vague or ambiguous stmts.</th>
<th>Non-obvious tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section of ad</td>
<td>No. of ads</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second sub-component of the appeal of the half-intelligible is the presence of descriptions of the product performing tasks that are not readily obvious it can perform. Twenty-nine of the 41 ads which exhibited four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising showed examples of this sub-component. These descriptions were found equally in isolation and in combination with other sections of an advertisement. For
example, six of these ads showed examples of this sub-component in only the visual area of the ad. Eight of the ads had the descriptions in only the body copy, while five of the ads had the descriptions in the headline and the body copy. In seven of the ads, descriptions of the product performing tasks not readily obvious were found in the visuals, the headline and the body copy (see Table 3). For example, in an advertisement for Microsoft's Bob software, a 1950s era family is pictured driving in a 1950s style convertible. The entire family is smiling and happy. The implication is that the software can help the consumer have a happy family life, which is outside the scope of what the product is designed to accomplish. Part of the headline of this ad reads, "And gee whiz, isn't making friends what friendliness is all about?" The body copy contains this statement, "Bob is one accommodating friend." (Wired, May 1995, pp. 6-7). Once again, it is outside of the scope of the software to enhance consumer's social lives.

The last of Boorstin's (1987) advertising appeals is the appeal of the contrived. This appeal has two sub-components: the presence of frenetic and/or disjointed statements, and the presence of improbable or fantastic imagery. The presence of frenetic and/or disjointed statements appear in 33 of the 41 ads which contain four advertising appeals. In contrast to the findings above, a large number of ads demonstrated this appeal in only the visual portion of the advertisement. 16 ads which exhibited all four advertising appeals had frenetic and/or disjointed statements in only the visuals. 21 ads which shared four advertising appeals had fantastic or improbable imagery present (see Table 4). This finding demonstrates that these two sub-components are closely linked, and share common traits. An example to illustrate the similarity between these two sub-components can be found in an ad for Motorola wireless personal digital assistants (PDAs). The ad
features two heads and five arms barely peering out of tall grass. Two of the arms in the foreground are holding the products. One of the arms in the background is holding one of the Motorola PDAs. A hand in the middle of the field of grass is making the "OK" sign (Wired, October 1995, pp. 6-7). Heads and arms popping out of tall grass holding PDAs is not only frenetic and contrived, but also highly improbable.

Table 4

Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Contrived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Frenetic statements</th>
<th>Improbable imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of ads</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the 20 advertisements which exhibited three of Boorstin's (1987) appeals were examined, only the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was found in all 20 ads. Six ads showed this appeal in the combination of the visuals, the headline and the body copy. An ad for the Xircom CreditCard Modem 28.8 shows the modem sitting on a towel at the beach. A drink and sunglasses are sitting next to the modem on the towel (Wired, October 1995, p. 79). The headline reads, "Check Out This Outrageous New Baud." The copy reads in part, "You need some serious baud." This image and these statements are

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
not factual, yet they are not necessarily false. A modem could sit on a towel, however unlikely that may be. Only one ad contained this appeal strictly in the body copy. One ad contained this appeal strictly in the headline, and two ads contained this appeal in only the visuals of the advertisement (see Table 5). In the majority of these advertisements, the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false was found in more than one section of the ad. This finding is similar to the ads which exhibited all four of Boorstin (1987) appeals.

Table 5

Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of ad</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few of the advertisements which demonstrated three of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising contained an example of the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Only three ads implied a threat, six ads promoted a future which would take place once the product was purchased, and no ads featured a celebrity endorsement (see Table 6). The majority of the ads which demonstrated this appeal did so in more than one section of the advertisement.

Vague or ambiguous statements were found in 18 of the 20 ads which exhibited three
Table 6

Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Self-fulfilling prophecy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Perception of threat</th>
<th>Future promised</th>
<th>Celeb. Endorsement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section of ad</td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
<td>No. of ads % of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>17 85%</td>
<td>14 70%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the advertising appeals. This sub-component of the appeal of the half-intelligible was found primarily in combination with other elements (the visuals, the headline and the body copy). Descriptions of the product performing tasks that are not readily obvious it can perform were found in nine of the subset of 20 advertisements. The majority of these nine ads displayed the tasks in both the visuals and the body copy (3 ads), and both the headline and the body copy (3 ads) (see Table 7).

Nine of the 20 advertisements studied in this subset contained the presence of frenetic and/or disjointed statements. Four of those ads contained those statements in only the visual portion of the ad. 15 of the 20 ads contained improbable statements or images. Of those 15, seven were isolated to the visuals of the ads in question. This suggests that the visual element of the advertising in *Wired* magazine has a strong frenetic component. The body copy of these advertisements is much less frenetic and/or disjointed. Like the 41 ads which shared all four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals, this smaller subset of ads shows a
Table 7

Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Vague or ambiguous stmts.</th>
<th>Non-obvious tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section of ad</td>
<td>No. of ads</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual. Headline</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual. Headline. Body</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

strong tie between the two sub-components of the appeal of the contrived (see Table 8).

Of the 75 ads analyzed for this study, 13 exhibited only two of Boorstin's (1987) appeals. All 13 advertisements in this subset demonstrated the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false. The majority of those ads showed that appeal in more than one section (see Table 9). None of the ads in this subset featured the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. This could be expected given the above results and the smaller sample size of 13 advertisements. Regarding the appeal of the half-intelligible: vague or ambiguous statements appeared in 12 of these ads, and six of the ads featured tasks which were out of scope with what the product was expected to accomplish (see Table 10). Vague statements appeared mostly in more than one ad section, while non-obvious tasks appeared primarily in only one section of the advertisements. Finally, only one ad exhibited the appeal of the contrived. That ad was recorded as having featured a visual description of an improbable or fantastic scene.
Table 8

Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Contrived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Frenetic statements</th>
<th>Improbable imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of ads</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Neither-true-nor-false

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of ad</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results show that over half of the 75 advertisements studied did qualify as pseudo-events under Boorstin's (1987) definition. This shows support for the claim that the advertisement of Wired magazine can be classified as a pseudo-event. A total of 41
advertisements exhibited all four of the appeals of advertising that Boorstin outlined. If
the argument is extended that matching three of the appeals also demonstrates a tendency
toward qualifying as a pseudo-event, an additional 20 advertisements qualify—bringing
the total to 61 advertisements which exhibit strong, or extremely strong characteristics of
a pseudo-event according to Boorstin's definition.

Table 10

Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Half-intelligible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-component</th>
<th>Vague or ambiguous stmts</th>
<th>Non-obvious tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section of ad</td>
<td>No. of ads</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Body</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline.Body</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual.Headline.Body</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Found</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stewart Millar's Traits of Wired's Design

Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of the design of Wired magazine were also studied in
relation to how many of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising were found in an
attempt to find a relationship between the two criteria. The presence of Stewart Millar's
traits of Wired's design in the advertising connects that advertising back to the content of
Wired. The argument can then be made that if the advertising of Wired displays
characteristics of a pseudo-event, then perhaps the entire magazine fits the definition of a
pseudo-event. Stewart Millar's traits of Wired's design are the use of unnatural color, the use of distorted photography, and the inclusion of computer interface elements in advertising. Thirty-seven ads showed at least one of Stewart Millar's traits when all four of Boorstin's advertising appeals were present. When three advertising appeals were found, Eighteen advertisements showed at least one of Stewart Millar's traits. Eleven ads demonstrated one or more advertising traits when there were only two of Boorstin's appeals, and the only ad not to show any of Boorstin's advertising appeals, did show one of Stewart Millar's traits of Wired's advertising.

Of the 37 ads which matched at least one of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits when four of Boorstin's (1987) advertising appeals were present, the use of unnatural color and distorted photography were present in the majority of them. 14 ads used unnatural color alone, four ads had only distorted photography, eight ads displayed a combination of unnatural color and distorted photography, and five ads had a combination of unnatural color, distorted photography and computer interface elements present. An example of an ad which displayed all three of Stewart Millar's design criteria is for Gilbert Papers. In this advertisement, a young woman wearing a 1950s style hairdo is shown from the shoulders up. Her face is expressionless. Her eyes jut forward in a three-dimensional box (Wired, May 95, p. 83). At the bottom of the ad is a button which reads "print this moment." The button is designed to look like a computer interface element. The colors in the ad are primarily deeply saturated blues—there is almost no natural color present. In addition, the photograph of the model is highly altered given that her eyes are protruding from her head superimposed on a three-dimensional box. Only one ad solely displayed
computer interface elements, two ads had both interface elements and unnatural color, while three ads displayed interface elements and distorted photography (see Table 11).

Table 11

Four of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design trait</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color.Photo</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Photo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color.Photo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar results were found when examining the 18 advertisements which exhibited at least one of Stewart Millar's (1998) advertising traits when three appeals of advertising were found. The use of unnatural color alone was found in four ads, two ads used distorted photography, five of the ads displayed a combination of unnatural color and distorted photography, and four of the ads showed distorted photography, the use of unnatural color and computer interface elements. An advertisement for NetBooks, shows a family sitting around the television in their living room (Wired, August 1995, p. 101).

The setting appears to be the 1950s. In the photo, a web browser interface is shown superimposed on the television set. There is little natural color in this ad, since the photo of the family is surrounded by bright, primary colors—reds, yellows and blues. In addition, the photograph of the 1950s family was altered to include the web browser on
the television set and a computer keyboard in the father's lap. Only one ad in this group only displayed interface elements. Two ads in this group only displayed photos. One ad showed examples of interface elements and unnatural color, while one other ad had both interface elements and distorted photography (see Table 12).

Table 12

Three of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design trait</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color.Photo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Photo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color.Photo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 18 100%

When two of Boorstin's (1987) advertising appeals were found in the ads studied, 11 of them contained at least one of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired magazine's advertising. Once again, the majority of these ads either showed the use of unnatural color, showed the use of distorted photography, or a combination of both. Four ads contained unnatural color, and three ads had examples of distorted photography. One ad contained examples of distorted photography and the use of unnatural color. Two of the ads in this subset showed the use of unnatural color, distorted photography, and computer interface elements. Finally, one ad displayed computer interface elements and the use of distorted photography (see Table 13).
Table 13

Two of Boorstin's appeals found: Stewart Millar's design traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design trait</th>
<th>No. of ads</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color.Photo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Photo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface.Color.Photo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The single ad out of the sample of 75 which exhibited none of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising, did display the use of unnatural color. This ad is for the U.S Robotics Sportster Modem which is examined in detail later in this chapter. The absence of natural color is primarily due to the focus on the modem itself, which is beige in color (Wired, October 1995, pp. 48-49).

Examples

To demonstrate the method of analysis described in the previous chapter, and how the results presented above were obtained, I will analyze two advertisements in detail. One will show characteristics of all four of Boorstin's (1987) advertising appeals and all of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of design. In contrast, the second will show none of Boorstin's appeals, and only one of Stewart Millar's traits of design.

The first advertisement is for Spry's Internet in a Box online service (Wired, February 1995, p. 39). This advertisement shows characteristics of all four of Boorstin's (1987)
appeals of advertising. The advertisement is made up of twelve equally sized boxes, three per row. The product logo, headline, and body copy are located in the center column, which is composed of four boxes. The left and right columns contain boxes with photographs in which the color has been highly altered, in addition to images of a web browser and a Windows dialog box. Moving from left to right, top to bottom, the boxes in the ad display the following information: 1) A photograph of the head of the Statue of Liberty. The photograph has been altered so that it is deep red in color. 2) A black box with the words "THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR YOU..." in bright red block type. 3) An extreme close-up photograph of an eye. The eye is upside-down and the colors have been inverted. This photograph has an unreal, greenish tint. 4) An aerial photograph of a mountain range. The sky is white, and the color of the mountains have been changed into a deep purple color. 5) The product logo. Behind the logo is a khaki-colored illustration of a map of the world. The text in this box, including the logo, reads, "The Complete Internet Solution. Internet in a Box With Instant Point-and-Click Access". 6) A photograph of a space shuttle lifting off. The colors of this image have also been inverted, and a purple and green cast has been applied to the image. 7) A close-up of a Windows dialog box featuring "Hotlists". In the background is the same khaki-colored map that is used in box #5 described above. 8) This box contains the advertisement's body copy. The body copy is printed with white type on a black background. It reads:

Internet In A Box™ from SPRY, Inc. is the only Windows™ compatible software that combines the ease-of-use of an online service with the worldwide resources of the Internet.

Start exploring the Internet in less than five minutes with a complete set of intuitive software. Internet In A Box makes it easy—you just point-and-click, and you're on your way to the Internet world.

What are you waiting for? (in bold red letters)
Various features of the product appear between bullets beneath the above copy:
"...Electronic Mail * News * Gopher * Telnet * File Transfer * Multimedia..." The remainder of the boxes in the advertisement are described as follows: 9) A web page with the title "Global Network Navigator" is shown. 10) A photograph of a desert road turned on its side with a purple "video noise" sky. 11) The word "NOW." in large black type on a red background. 12) A sepia-toned photograph of a baby's face with the company's logo and phone numbers superimposed on top of it, obscuring part of the face.

When analyzing this advertisement to find Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, non-factual or ambiguous statements were found in the visual, headline and body copy of the ad. In the visual portion of the advertisement, the images used have been distorted with unusual color treatments. For example: a space shuttle is clearly taking off in one of the photographs, but the odd colors used in the photo give it an unreal look. The headline of the ad reads, "THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR YOU..." This is an ambiguous statement. The world is not actually "waiting" for the reader; the product is instead promising connection to the Internet. Finally, one line in the body copy reads "The Complete Internet Solution." The advertisement does not give any indication of how complete this solution is. The reader cannot possibly evaluate the truth of that statement.

Only the body copy of this example advertisement demonstrates Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy. A line in the body copy reads, "What are you waiting for?" This line demonstrates an implication of threat. The implied threat is that the "wired" world will not wait forever, and that the reader should purchase and use the software as soon as possible. Another line in the body copy eludes to a vision of the...
future that the product will fulfill. "Just point-and-click, and your on your way to the
Internet world." The ad is promising a future of Internet access if the product is
purchased and a subscription is made to the service. This advertisement does not show
endorsement by a celebrity in either the visual, headline or body copy.

For Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the half-intelligible, the Spry Internet in a Box
advertisement shows vague descriptions of the product that fail to describe its function in
the visuals and the headline copy. The body copy does not demonstrate this appeal. In the
visuals, there are some tightly cropped images of a web browser and a computer dialog
box with "hotlists". It is not clear what functionality is being described in these images of
"hotlists"—they are not explained in any way. The headline copy, "THE WORLD IS
WAITING FOR YOU..." does not accurately describe the actual functionality of the
product. In addition, there is a visual element of the ad describing the product performing
tasks that have not been originally associated with the product. The advertisement
features a photograph of the space shuttle, a small baby, a desert landscape and the Statue
of Liberty. None of these images are directly related or associated with Internet access.

Finally, Boorstin's (1987) fourth appeal of advertising, the appeal of the contrived, is
found in only the visuals of the Spry Internet in a Box ad. The images of the space
shuttle, the baby, the desert landscape and the Statue of Liberty are not related and feel
disjointed placed next to each other. There are also statements or scenes that are
improbable or fantastic in this advertisement. The colors being used to alter the
photographs have changed them into unusual looking scenes and landscapes.

This advertisement also exhibits the visual characteristics that Stewart Millar (1998)
points out as common to the content of Wired magazine. There are depictions of a
computer interface in the dialog box and the web browser. The grid layout also evokes a
graphical user interface with each discrete bit of information in its own window. There is
also little use of natural color. In fact the photographs used in this ad have been altered to
remove all traces of natural color from them.

The above analysis shows that this particular advertisement displays each of Boorstin's
(1987) appeals of advertising, although not all within each section of the advertisement
(visual, headline, and body). Following Boorstin's definition, this advertisement would be
classified as a pseudo-event which could set up an extravagant expectation in the mind of
the reader. The extravagant expectation promoted by this advertisement is the promise of
a world of information at the readers' fingertips. Additionally, the fact that Stewart
Millar's (1998) visual traits of Wired's advertising have been meet by the Spry Internet in
a Box advertisement, ties it more closely to the content of Wired.

In contrast, one advertisement of the 75 studied exhibited none of Boorstin's (1987)
appeals. This advertisement is for the U.S Robotics Sportster modem (Wired, October
1995, pp. 48-49). Unlike the Spry Internet in a Box ad, the Sportster ad spans two pages.
On the left page, there is a photo of the product on a plain, dark reddish background.
Above the image of the modem, is the first part of the headline copy in large white type.
It reads, "Nothing beats a Sportster. No way. No where. No how." The right page of the
ad is white and uses black type. The second part of the headline copy is located at the top
of this page set in the same size type as the previous page. It reads, "Independent studies
prove Sportster V.34 outperforms leading 28.8 modems." Below this copy is close to a
full page of text outlining in detail how the Sportster modem is superior to other modems.
The text outlines the results of two independent tests which illustrate the advantages of
the Sportster modem over its competition. Three bar charts are interspersed throughout the text. These colorful charts show the results of a compatibility test, a connection success rate test and a cumulative throughput test. At the very bottom of the right-hand page is the company's phone number and the product logo. Several logos of awards the product has won have been placed on each side of the Sportster logo. At the very top of the entire ad is a thin red strip which contains the U.S. Robotics logo on the far right.

This straightforward ad contains none of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising. The appeal of the neither-true-nor-false is not found in the visuals, the headline or the body copy. All three elements related to this appeal do state facts in this advertisement and are not ambiguous. None of the sub-components of the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy are manifested in this ad. There is no implication of threat of being left out of the "wired" generation, no particular future promised if the product is purchased, and no celebrity endorsement in the Sportster ad. The appeal of the half-intelligible is absent from this advertisement as well. There are no vague descriptions of the product or descriptions of the product performing tasks that are not immediately evident that it can perform. All the descriptions of the Sportster modem in this ad are clear and straightforward. Lastly, this advertisement does not contain examples of the appeal of the contrived. There are no frenetic or disjointed statements, and no scenes or descriptions of the improbable or fantastic. The U.S. Robotics Sportster ad is highly factual and clear in its visuals, headline, and body copy.

The Sportster ad does contain one of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired magazine's advertising. There is little natural color present in this ad. Primarily this is due to the use of the dark red background, and the beige color of the modem itself.
The two examples above outline ads which demonstrate both all of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising and none of these appeals. The first ad for Spry's Internet in a Box can be called a pseudo-event under Boorstin's definition since it contains all of his appeals of advertising. Boorstin classifies advertising that contains his four appeals a pseudo-event (p. 214). The second ad for the U.S. Robotics Sportster modem cannot be called a pseudo-event under Boorstin's definition since it did not display any of his appeals of advertising. It can be argued that the Spry ad raises what Boorstin calls extravagant expectations of a world at the readers fingertips. The U.S. Robotics ad—showing none of Boorstin's appeals—can be said not to promote extravagant expectations. That ad, being factual and straightforward, does not give the reader any reason to dream of the future, feel left behind, or think about what possession of the product can do for the reader's lifestyle. There is no extraneous information in the Sportster ad beyond the factual statements of speed and value.

Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits underscore the fact that the Spry ad is classified as a pseudo-event, and the U.S. Robotics ad is not. The Spry ad contains all three of Stewart Millar's design traits. This connects the ad to the editorial content of the magazine since these design traits were originally intended to describe the journalism, photography and art of the magazine itself. If this ad shares traits in common with the entire magazine, then it can be argued that the magazine shares traits in common with the ad—which has been classified as a pseudo-event under Boorstin's (1987) definition.

The factual U.S. Robotics ad, which displays none of Boorstin's (1987) appeals of advertising, only contains one of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of design—unnatural color. The unnatural color of the ad is a factor of it not fitting the definition of a pseudo-
event. The primary visual in the ad is a plain photograph of the modem, and the color of the modem happens to be beige. The color of the ad has not been distorted to appear unnatural. The modem itself is not a natural color. Even though unnatural color was recorded for this image, it can be argued that the photograph preserves the "natural" color of this unnaturally shaded product. If this argument is followed, then it can be said that none of Stewart Millar's design traits are really present in this image. This emphasizes the fact that the U.S. Robotics ad does not fit Boorstin's definition of a pseudo-event since the other 74 ads which display two or more of Boorstin's appeals also contain stronger examples of Stewart Millar's design traits.

The fact that one or more of Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired's advertising were found in the majority of ads analyzed shows a close relationship between those traits and Boorstin's (1987) appeals. This close relationship shows support that the advertising in Wired magazine has strong visual similarities to the editorial content. Since Stewart Millar argues that her design traits are part of Wired's digital discourse, there is support that the advertising in Wired is part of the magazine's digital discourse. Finding Stewart Millar's traits in the majority of the ads connects the advertising to the magazine as a whole, and helps strengthen the argument that the entire magazine acted as a pseudo-event under Boorstin's definition.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this study, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of 75 advertisements sampled from the pages of *Wired* magazine. The advertisements were selected across five different issues (February, May, August, October and December), to accumulate a varied sample for that year. Specific patterns in the advertisements were gathered and coded, but it was also necessary to make interpretations about the latent data that was gathered. I analyzed these images to explore the following research questions. First, does the advertising in *Wired* magazine exhibit characteristics of a pseudo-event according to Boorstin's (1987) definition? Second, are the design traits Stewart Millar (1998) finds in the content of *Wired* also found in the advertising of *Wired*? The answer to this question will help connect the advertising of *Wired* to the content of the magazine as a whole. Third, does an examination of *Wired* contribute to what Boorstin (1987) called the extravagant expectations of the culture—in particular, during the dot-com boom of the late 1990s? Finally, are Boorstin's theories on pseudo-events still relevant today—more than 40 years after his initial ideas on the subject were published?

Pseudo-events and Extravagant Expectations

This study found that the advertising in *Wired* magazine did exhibit characteristics of a pseudo-event according to Boorstin's (1987) definition. Boorstin states that advertising
is a type of pseudo-event (p. 214), and as such it contains the following four appeals: the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the appeal of the half-intelligible and the appeal of the contrived. Forty-one (55%) of the advertisements studied demonstrated all four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals. This number represents the majority of the ads studied. Twenty (27%) ads showed three of Boorstin's appeals. Thirteen (17%) showed two of Boorstin's appeals, and only one ad showed none of the advertising appeals. If an advertisement did not exhibit all four of Boorstin's appeals, the presence of some appeals still gives that ad certain characteristics of a pseudo-event.

Seventy-four of the advertisements studied exhibited the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false. This turned out to be the strongest of Boorstin's (1987) appeals since it was found in the overwhelming majority of the ads studied. This appeal was most often found in multiple parts of the advertisements. It was rarely found alone in either the visuals, headline, or body copy, but most often found in a combination of two or more parts of the ad. Again, this suggests that the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false is pervasive, not just through all the ads studied, but through all the different components of an ad. Boorstin points out that in successful advertising, "what is called for is less a verifiable fact than a credible statement" (p. 215). Wired's advertisers left nothing to chance in positioning these merely credible statements throughout each section of the ads studied. The dominance of the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false suggests that the majority of the advertising in Wired—at least in 1995—was simply credible, and not necessarily true. This echoes Pollay's (1986) assertion that advertising consists of "incomplete information, half-truths or careful deceptions" (p. 22). The dominance of the appeal of
the neither-true-nor-false in these ads also makes sense when one considers that *Wired* was "selling the future" (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 81). By definition, concrete, truthful statements about the future are difficult to make.

The appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy consists of three sub-components. These are the perception of a threat (in this case—of being left out of the "wired" generation), the promise of a future that will take shape once the product is purchased, and the endorsement of a celebrity. The perception of threat was found in 21 of the 75 ads, and then primarily in the headline and body copy of those ads, which indicates a predominately verbal communication of this sub-component—a threat is a difficult concept to make visually. The threat sub-component was not present in as many ads as I had anticipated prior to engaging in the study. Stewart Millar (1998) asserts that a common theme in *Wired* is a threat or feeling of being left out if the products in the magazine are not purchased (p. 80). She also makes the claim that "*Wired* associates success in the new economy with the purchase and use of the latest high-technology products" (Stewart Millar, p. 77). White (1995) and Winner (1997) state that *Wired* uses fear to ensure the loyalty of its readers so that they will continually feel obligated to keep up with the latest trends in digital technology. Given these assertions, I expected to find more examples of the threat sub-component. This finding suggests that the advertising in *Wired* did not threaten consumers as aggressively as the authors cited above imply.

Forty-four of the advertisements studied exhibited the sub-component of a promising future. It was found primarily in the headline and body copy of the ads, which suggests that promising a future to *Wired* readers was best accomplished through words and not visuals. An idea such as "the world's first future friendly network" (*Wired*, February
1995, pp. 18-19) is easier stated through words. The predominance of this sub-component was expected because Wired sells to a type of consumer—a early digital adopter—that is such because they purchase certain digital products. Hence, they make the future happen by buying products that Wired's advertisers suggest are the wave of the future—which is, of course, a self-fulfilling prophecy, a trait of a pseudo-event.

The last sub-component of the appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy—the celebrity endorsement—was only found in three advertisements. Clearly, Wired's advertisers did not enlist celebrities to promote their products, but instead relied primarily on the other methods outlined in this chapter. Boorstin (1987) defines a celebrity as a "person who is known for his well-knownness" (p. 57). In relationship to pseudo-events, Boorstin claims that securing a celebrity endorsement creates the illusion that the celebrity is naturally involved with the product—which helps to distinguish one product from another (p. 216). Since the novel digital products were different and exciting enough in themselves, perhaps the advertisers in Wired did not see the need to recruit celebrities to sell them.

The appeal of the half-intelligible is made up of two sub-components. These consist of the ad containing vague or ambiguous statements, and the ad containing descriptions of tasks which are unrelated to the functionality of the product. Vague or ambiguous statements were found in 71 of the 75 ads studied. Like the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, these statements were mostly found in combination with different parts of the ads—the visuals, the headline and the body copy. When these statements were found, they were seldom located in only one section of an ad. The frequency of vague or ambiguous statements, combined with the fact they were primarily found in more than one section of an ad, establishes a link between the appeal of the half-intelligible and the
appeal of the neither-true-nor-false. It can be argued that a set of advertisements which exhibit only credible statements would also contain vague or ambiguous ones as well since statements that are merely credible and do not state a fact, are often vague and ambiguous as well.

Descriptions of non-obvious tasks were found in the majority of the ads studied, but not as frequently as vague or ambiguous statements. Forty-four of the 75 ads examined contained descriptions of non-obvious tasks. These descriptions were not weighted toward any one section of an advertisement, but distributed evenly across the visuals, the headlines and the body copy. *Wired’s* advertisers did not favor any particular placement for these messages, but preferred to space them relatively evenly throughout each element of the ads. Neither the verbal or the visual was predominant with this sub-component.

The appeal of the contrived consists of two sub-components: frenetic and/or disjointed statements and improbable imagery. Frenetic statements were found in 42 of the 75 advertisements studied and improbable imagery was found in 55 of the 75 ads. The majority of the occurrences of these two sub-components were primarily found in the visuals of the ads, which is not surprising since these two sub-components are primarily visual. One of the traits of digital discourse, according to Stewart Millar (1998) is that it is "intense, dazzling ... and infused with a hyperactive sensibility" (p. 35). These descriptions of digital discourse are primarily visual, and tie directly into the appeal of the contrived. Finding the appeal of the contrived in these ads implies a connection between the advertising of *Wired* and Stewart Millar’s digital discourse. In addition, the fact that the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false and the appeal of the half-intelligible
were also predominately found in the visuals of the ads suggests that imagery played a crucial role in Wired's advertising.

Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits of Wired magazine were heavily used in the advertising of Wired. Stewart Millar's design traits were found in 37 of the 41 ads which demonstrated four of Boorstin's (1987) appeals, 18 of the 20 ads which demonstrated three appeals, and 11 of the 13 ads which demonstrated two appeals. One design trait was also found in the only ad not to show any of Boorstin's (1987) appeals. The number of ads which contained one or more of Stewart Millar's design traits totals 67 of the 75 ads studied, an overwhelming majority.

The design traits that occurred the most were the use of unnatural color (23 ads), the combination of unnatural color and distorted photography (14 ads), the combination of unnatural color, distorted photography and the use of computer interface elements (11 ads), and the use of distorted photography (9 ads). Elements of a computer interface rarely were displayed alone, but most often in combination with unnatural color or distorted photography.

These results not only show that Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits are found in the advertising of Wired, but they show the dominance imagery plays in that advertising. Harms and Kellner (1991) argue that contemporary society is placing an ever greater emphasis on the importance of images. The fact that Wired visually distorts reality in its advertising shows that Wired's advertisers believed that straightforward, unmanipulated imagery was no longer sufficient to capture the attention of the consumer. They believed that the hyperactive sensibility of digital discourse was the way to sell their products.
The predominance of Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits in the advertisements studied suggests a strong relationship between the advertisements which demonstrated Boorstin's (1987) appeals, and the design characteristics of Wired's contents. This strong link helps establish a relationship between the advertising of Wired and the entirety of the magazine since Stewart Millar's design traits were originally conceived to describe the content of Wired. In addition, Stewart Millar argues that studying the advertising content of Wired is important to understanding the voice and rhetoric of the magazine as a whole. Since Boorstin's appeals have been found in a majority of Wired's advertising, and Stewart Millar's design traits have been found in the majority of the advertising as well, I argue that there is a strong connection between the advertising and the content of Wired. Not only can the advertising of Wired be classified as a pseudo-event, but by extension, so can the entire magazine.

In The Image, one of Boorstin's (1987) primary claims is that pseudo-events set what he calls extravagant expectations—expectations that are out of proportion with reality. He believes that the rapid pace of manufactured images and events help set our expectations of what to expect from the world to excessively high levels. Boorstin is concerned that by feeding our extravagant expectations with pseudo-events, we "create the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves" (p. 5).

In the analysis above, I have shown that the advertising of Wired fits Boorstin's (1987) definition of a pseudo-event. I have also argued that Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits tie the content and the advertising of Wired together. Stewart Millar writes, "While the ads provide detailed product information and create brand name association, the editorial of Wired helps to construct the image of the digital generation that creates
and uses such products" (p. 81). Based on the above results, which have been gained by examining the advertising used in this study, I conclude that Wired did contribute to the extravagant expectations set in the mid-1990s during the dot-com and technology boom. The specific extent of that contribution will have to be left to a future study, but it is clear that Wired structured its advertising around the promotion of a utopian, digital society where the purchase of the latest technology would reinforce that ideal.

Even in the limited scope of this study, Boorstin's (1987) theories on pseudo-events are relevant. This study shows that pseudo-events do exist and are plentiful in the advertising pages of Wired. Indeed, the majority of the advertisements studied were classified as pseudo-events using Boorstin's appeals of advertising. Boorstin's definition of an advertisement as a type of pseudo-event has allowed the ads used in this study to be broken down, analyzed in detail, and ultimately classified as a pseudo-event or a non-pseudo-event. In addition, Stewart Millar's (1998) traits of Wired's design and her concept of digital discourse have proven crucial in linking the advertisements to the magazine as a whole and ultimately classifying Wired as a pseudo-event.

Implications

This study has demonstrated that examining the advertising of Wired magazine has been valuable on numerous levels. Stewart Millar's (1998), analysis of Wired pointed out that studying the advertising of the magazine is important to looking at the voice and rhetoric of the magazine as a whole, or what she calls its digital discourse. She defined this discourse as being visually stimulating (p. 35). The predominance of ads which displayed frenetic statements and improbable imagery, in addition to the number of ads
which featured distorted colors and photography, demonstrates that the ads studied fit Stewart Millar's concept of digital discourse. This further strengthens the argument that the advertising and content of *Wired* share common traits. Since the advertising and content of *Wired* have been shown to be linked through digital discourse, if the advertising of *Wired* is classified as a pseudo-event, the entire magazine can also be classified as a pseudo-event.

The argument that the contents of *Wired* as a whole can be classified as a pseudo-event is an important conclusion to be drawn from this study. It shows that Boorstin's (1987) ideas have value in not just studying technology advertising, but technology publications which carry that advertising. This study argues that the technology advertising in *Wired* contributed to the extravagant expectations of the mid-1990s. It is entirely possible that technology advertising carried within other publications may have contributed to those expectations as well.

This study suggests that pseudo-events exist and can be examined in other media besides *Wired*. *Wired* is a mass-market publication with a large audience, an audience that undoubtedly reads other magazines and consumes other forms of media. *Wired* has had influence over and has been influenced by other publications. Cassidy (2001) points out that *Wired* spawned a series of similar magazines during the technology boom, including *Fast Company*, *The Industry Standard* and *Red Herring* (pp. 174-175). Stewart Millar (1998) points out a connection between *Wired* and fashion magazines when discussing the techniques used by fashion magazines to ensure that their readers consume the products advertised within their pages. According to Stewart Millar, both fashion magazines and *Wired* "create images of the self that can only be achieved through"
consumption" (p. 77). It could be argued that the advertising of the technology magazines above, in addition to the advertising of fashion magazines, could be examined using a similar technique to the one used in this study. I would expect such studies to uncover pseudo-events within both the advertising and the content of these publications. The frequency of these pseudo-events would be unknown until a detailed study had been conducted. However, based on the results of this study, I would expect to find similar results in other technology publications influenced by Wired. I would also expect to find similar results in fashion magazines, based on the parallels Stewart Millar draws between fashion publications and Wired. This is especially true given the importance Stewart Millar placed on the element of threat—or the fear of being left behind—in the pages of Wired. Her parallel with fashion magazines follows a similar vein. The advertising and content in fashion magazines plays to consumers' fear of being left out of a lifestyle if certain products which are associated with that lifestyle are not purchased. Given this similarity, I would expect to find that the element of threat would be present, but not be as prevalent as Stewart Millar asserts given that the element of threat was not found in great quantities by this study.

If one were to expand this analysis out beyond technology and fashion magazines, there is a strong possibility that such an analysis would find similar results to this study. The primary reason for this assertion is that Wired is a mainstream, mass-market publication, meant to compete for the attention of consumers in the media landscape. Given this assumption, it cannot be assumed that the advertising in Wired is completely unique and original, but shares elements in common with other mainstream magazine advertising. The particular breakdown of Boorstin's (1987) appeals might not be the same
in a travel publication, for example, but I would expect that a majority of advertisements would be classified as pseudo-events. Of course, it would take an actual study of those advertisements to confirm that assumption.

This study has also shown that there is value in the examination and recognition of pseudo-events. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, I could not locate a study in the literature which attempted to locate pseudo-events in media using Boorstin's (1987) theories on the subject. Undoubtedly, other methods could have been used to link the content of Wired with the excesses of the dot-com boom. For example, a detailed content analysis of the editorial content of the magazine could have been performed which looked for specific words and phrases which boosted extravagant expectations within its readership. Such an undertaking was not only outside the scope of a limited study such as this one, it also would not have tested Boorstin's theories—which was an important goal of this research. This study has demonstrated that Boorstin outlined specific characteristics of advertising which can be broken down and more importantly, successfully tested. Beyond advertising, he also enumerated characteristics of pseudo-events in general, such as being carefully planned, ambiguous, dramatic, repeatable, easily distributed, and convenient to witness (pp. 39-40). These categories allow not just advertising to be tested as a pseudo-event, but practically any subject in the field of communications—journalism, speeches, television programs, films, radio, or the Internet. Once a pseudo-event has been recognized, it can then be analyzed in a larger societal context. Questions can then be asked about the pseudo-event's relationship to the extravagant expectations of society. Once the unreal nature of the event has been uncovered, other questions can be raised. Funkhouser and Shaw (1990) assert that
synthetic experience has reinforced the unrealistic expectation that problems will be solved quickly and that mediated versions of reality will increasingly approach perfection (pp. 82-83). Questions could be asked about the relationship of a particular pseudo-event to the public's perception of a problem, or how "pure" a pseudo-event is in comparison to normal events. In today's saturated media landscape, another interesting use for Boorstin's theories would be to examine the relationship of pseudo-events to spontaneous events. Do people recognize pseudo-events over real events? Do pseudo-events outweigh real events? How synthetic is modern experience and how much of it is genuine? In the 1960s, Boorstin argued that pseudo-events generally dominate real events (p. 39). I would imagine that given the acceleration in communications technology over the past 40 years, his assertion is even more credible today.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, mostly related to the scope of the project. I used a limited data set of 75 advertisements, and those advertisements covered only one year in the publishing history of Wired. A more thorough study of this material would not only use a larger sample, but select ads over multiple years—perhaps well into the dot-com boom—to examine if Wired kept up the expectations it set in the early years of its existence. This suggests another limitation of the study. No analysis was done comparing the advertising of Wired in 1995 with advertising in current issues to see if pseudo-events are still prevalent within the pages of the magazine. There is a difference between current issues of Wired, and the issues referenced in this study. When Condé Nast Publications purchased Wired in 1998, it became part of its stable of magazines such as Architectural Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Digest and Vanity Fair. Wired's current editor, Chris Anderson, has commented that the magazine has gone more mainstream in recent years. Wired also began losing technology ad income in 2002 (Carr, 2002, p. C1). While outside the scope of this study, it would be interesting to examine how the sale of Wired to Condé Nast and its decline in technology ad revenue influenced the direction in its advertising.

When analyzing the advertisements in relation to Boorstin's (1987) appeals, I did not break down the analysis per advertisement, but instead focused on the numbers of appeals within certain groupings (all four of Boorstin's appeals, three appeals, etc.) This approach excluded the study of appeals common to any one advertisement. For example, if an advertisement exhibited the appeal of the neither-true-nor-false, I did not construct an analysis to determine if that same ad exhibited the appeal of the contrived. Such granularity was outside the scope of this study, but could have shed light on the similarities that were found in the frequency of certain appeals.

The analysis method used for this study was primarily qualitative. As I viewed and coded the ads, I made determinations on the implicit meanings within the ads based on my evaluation of Boorstin's (1987) definitions. There was also only one coder involved in the analysis. This decision was also related to the timing and scope of the project. A second or third coder would have been valuable in enhancing the accuracy of the analysis.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, I came to the conclusion that Wired as a whole functioned as a pseudo-event to raise the expectations of its readers by analyzing its advertising and then connecting the advertising back to the content through Stewart Millar's (1998) design traits. A more through and definitive approach would have been to
examine the editorial content of the magazine as well, using Boorstin's (1987) characteristics of a pseudo-event as a criteria. Unfortunately, such an extensive undertaking was outside the scope of this project.

This study did not examine Wired's in-house advertising or non-technology advertising. The advertising Wired used to promote itself could have strengthened the connection between the advertising run in Wired and its editorial contents. Non-technology advertising was also excluded for reasons of scope. This includes ads for apparel, cosmetics, and automobiles. These ads could warrant a study of their own since it was rare for general lifestyle products to be featured in the pages of a computer publication before Wired. Including these ads in my study could have shed additional insight on the extravagant expectations of Wired's readership. For example, one could argue that the acceptance of the digital lifestyle also implies a lifestyle populated by fine automobiles, clothing and other symbols of the good life—and the dot-com boom. Including non-technology advertisements might have allowed that argument to be formally presented.

I did not study other computer and technology publications which were publishing in the mid-1990s. Examining the advertising of other popular computer magazines might strengthen or weaken the arguments presented in this study, depending on the results. This would have shed light on whether Wired was alone in its opinion and direction or if similar magazines shared the same viewpoint—and if they contributed to the culture's extravagant expectations as well.
Directions for Future Research

The content of Wired magazine should be studied further to gain additional insight into the effect it had on the expansion of what Stewart Millar (1998) calls digital discourse, and what Boorstin (1987) labeled extravagant expectations. Future research might analyze the editorial content of Wired to confirm the relationship between the advertising and the rest of the magazine as eluded to in this study. It would also be beneficial if a future study examined recent issues of Wired. This would determine if the magazine is currently raising expectations in its readers, and in what context. Could Wired have been setting extravagant expectations in its audience in the late-1990s? Is a digital lifestyle still heavily promoted in the pages of the magazine? Research into more recent issues could answer these questions.

A majority of the ads which contained Boorstin's (1987) appeal of the self-fulfilling prophecy promised a future that would take place once the product had been purchased. Additional research could expand on the promotion of the future and the nature of time in Wired's advertising. Wolberg (2001) found that many advertisements in American magazines which had an orientation towards the future also contained an element of planning for the future—for example, ads for life insurance (p. 709). Gross and Sheth (1989) in their study of time in American advertising concluded that in industrialized societies consumers are preoccupied with time, and that they largely expect products to help them save time (p. 81). How did the technology products advertised in Wired which promoted the future also promote planning for the future? Similarly, how pervasive was the notion of saving time in Wired's advertising? Planning for the future often involves saving time in the future—by digitally organizing the day, buying a faster printer, using a
phone with quicker dialing features, etc. Research into this area could begin to tell us if Wired's readers anticipated more time-saving devices than other magazine readers. Such research could show that their expectations for the future—and saving time in the future—were being set higher than that of other magazine readers.

It would be interesting to examine the links between Wired and digital economy to see what part the connection played in the growth of the digital economy. Stewart Millar (1998) points out that many individuals on the staff of Wired were members of the Global Business Network, an organization whose mission is to steer "future directions in the economy in the interests of business" (p. 84). Just how strongly did Wired act in the capacity of a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding the digital economy? Was it in the best economic interests of its founders and writers to promote high expectations of a fantastic digital culture so that they would come true? If so, then it could be more strongly argued that the entire magazine was (and perhaps still is) a pseudo-event, since acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy is one of the primary characteristics of a pseudo-event.

A future study could go further into measuring the extent of Wired's contributions to the extravagant expectations which lead to the technology boom of the mid 1990s. This would involve a more thorough analysis of the entire content of the magazine, not just its advertisements. Perhaps data contained within the editorial content of the magazine would further illuminate a heightening of expectations in its readership.

Conclusion

Wired magazine began publishing in 1993, a few years before the dot-com and technology boom began its profound impact on the economy and the culture. Wired not
only covered developments in technology and telecommunications, but voiced a strong opinion that advancements in technology would lead to an improved—almost utopian—world (Stewart Millar, 1998, p. 108). The pages of Wired promoted a vision of a technological paradise to its audience, and in many cases set up expectations that in reality could not be fulfilled.

In The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, Daniel Boorstin (1987) claimed that pseudo-events—or events that have been manufactured specifically to be disseminated and consumed—are responsible for shaping what he called our culture's extravagant expectations (p. 5). This study has pointed out that many scholars recognize the value of studying advertising to better understand cultural history. By selecting and examining a particular characteristic of Wired—its advertising—this study has shown that the contents of the magazine can be classified as a pseudo-event. This conclusion supports the argument that Wired contributed to the extravagant expectations of the culture that accompanied the dot-com boom. In performing this analysis, this study has also shown that Boorstin's theories regarding pseudo-events are useful for analyzing advertising, and suggests that they can be used in examining other types of media.

Concerned about the effect manufactured events have in shaping our perception of reality, Boorstin suggested looking at pseudo-events to "penetrate the unknown jungle of images in which we live our daily lives" (p. 261). This study has taken a step in that direction by using pseudo-events to examine a relatively small portion of the recent media landscape. Hopefully, future studies will apply Boorstin's theories to other subjects in which manufactured events play a critical role.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Wired. (1993-) San Francisco.

VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Guy Joseph Schackman

Home Address:
Santa Monica, California

Degrees:
Bachelor of Science, Computer Information Processing, 1986
Loyola University, New Orleans

Thesis Title: Contemporary Pseudo-Events: An Analysis of the Advertising in Wired Magazine

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Dolores Tanno, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Julian Kilker, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Gary Larson, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Andrea Fontana, Ph.D.