

# [Cosmopolitan promotional strategies](https://assignbuster.com/cosmopolitan-promotional-strategies/)

## A case study into the promotional strategies of a consumer magazine and how these integrate into the marketing strategy of the sector of magazine publishing.

## Promotional Strategies

What I chose and why

For this case study I have chosen to critiqueCosmopolitan. This magazine was chosen for numerous reasons. Firstly for it’shistorical role within the landscape of women’s magazines in the UK. Alsobecause up until recently Cosmopolitan was the highest selling women’s magazinein the UK. Due to the launch of Glamour, Cosmopolitan has lost this title. Iwill explore the promotional strategies Cosmopolitan has employed to try toregain their past position as top of the magazine rankings, and look at howsuccessful they have been to date.

Cosmopolitan has been the magazine of choiceuntil Glamour launched in 2000. Glamour broke convention by printing in asmaller size that could fit in a woman’s handbag. Glamour ultimately ushered inthe era of convenience in magazines. Women no longer turn to magazines foropinion, unless it’s on makeup and clothes

Cosmopolitan’s target audience

According to the Cosmopolitan media pack:

Cosmo women are young, ambitious, informed. Themajority are in full-time work. They earn – and they spend! Cosmo women spendover 1 billion a year on fashion. They account for 1 out of every 11 spenton cosmetics and skincare in the UK. Cosmo readers live well: they spend over2 billion on their homes, 3. 5 billion on food and almost 1. 4 billion on newcars. 1

PEST Analysis

Political Future

When the title launched in the UK in 1972, theeditor – Joyce Hopkirk -and fashion and beauty editor – Deirdre McShany – bothcame from the Sun. Left-wing views were quite prominent in the UK version. Infact, in the second UK edition, Germaine Greer’s husband caused a stir byposing nude in the magazine – an inside joke for feminists.

In it’s early stages, Cosmopolitan was constantlyin the headlines. The Daily Mail was shocked by its use of the word” virgin” in an ad, and London Transport insisted that the word” frigid”, used in another ad, must be covered up with a black strip. However, the black strip wasn’t long enough, and on some posters the advertread, ‘ I was f…. d!’.

The current trend in women’s magazines is movingaway from political and social issues and more into the world of celebrity andsensationalism. Despite this, Cosmopolitan is determined to maintain itspolitical routes. In January 2005, Sam Baker, the magazine’s current editor, contacted the leaders of the Labour, Liberal and Conservative parties forinterviews in the magazine to coincide with the 2005 general election. In aninterview with Louise France for The Observer she explained herreasoning behind these political features:

Bakerdoesn’t care what her readers vote, she just believes that they need toexercise their rights. ‘ If we don’t, we’re in danger of disenfranchisingourselves. And if we don’t start voting we run the risk of never voting. 2

Economic Future

The magazine market has hada5% year-on-year rise in the number of copies actively purchasedaccording to ABC figures released for the period to December 2004. However, there has been fear about a possible saturation of the women’s magazine market. ABC figures showed there was no cause for concern.

This yearhowever, I believe is the year of the women’s magazine market. These latestfigures reveal an upward surge in women’s glossies such as Glamour, Cosmopolitan and Marie Claire . This increase in circulationindicates that women’s appetite for glossies magazines hasn’t abated or reachedsaturation point like many feared. 3

Despite a clear rise in women’smagazine readership, Cosmopolitan – which rose 5. 08% from 397, 272 in December2003 to 417, 445 in December 2004 – Cosmopolitan still finds itself in anunstable position, trailing in second place to Glamour magazine, which had a5. 67% year on year increase, from 548, 672 to 579, 761.

Social-Cultural Future

Women’smagazines, especially fashion magazines, tend to address well-educated youngreaders who are seen as loyal, independent, and ready to spend. This explainsthe overall in conformity of magazine content, with their sections devoted tocelebrity features, fashion, beauty, health, interior and lifestyle. Butmagazine publishers – like the media industry in general – are now viewingyouth as an increasingly elastic category (Gough-Yates, 2003, p4).

On a whole, Cosmopolitan has tried to fight this trend towards celebrity and fashion, bymaintaining a sexual orientation to its features. However, elasticity in thereadership is more wide spread. Currently, there are large proportions ofBangladesh, Indian, Black Caribbean, Black African and Chinese women in thedemographic that Cosmopolitan targets 4 . Again, Cosmopolitan hasresisted this cultural change; the majority of non-white faces in the May 2005edition were from the advertisement pages.

Technological Future

Cosmopolitanhas not bought into technological change as much as its contemporaries. Mostwomen’s magazines now have an online version of the magazine for people toview. However, Cosmopolitan choose provide a service with their online presence; a means for its audience to purchase the branded items, and access otherservices related to the magazine and its readers. Cosmopolitan’s website ismore of a Cosmopolitan portal.

From the PESTanalysis, it is clear that Cosmopolitan does not adjust well to change. It seesitself as an institution due to its early political routes and is finding ithard to shake this responsibility.

Promotional strategies employed

The Message

The strapline for Cosmopolitan is ‘ For FunFearless Females’. While it emphasises strength in women, there is anunderlying element of not being afraid to be feminine, indicated in the use ofthe world females instead of women. This coincides with McCracken’s (1993)belief that when buying a magazine we are buying into a feminine ideal. Infact, she believes that women readers are duped bymagazines into becoming slaves to trends in fashion, beauty and femininity.

The Cover

It isconvention among women’s magazines to have their featured star celebrityadorning the covers. This is a major promotional tool in the currentcelebrity-focused climate. Cosmopolitan strays from this slightly. While themagazine will have a celebrity featured in every edition, these celebrities areoften not featured on the cover. Instead, Cosmopolitan has created a coverelement called ‘ Cosmo Loves’, and a celebrity of choice is placed on the coverunder this banner. There is a page inside the magazine that offers the coverstar a small focus – without this, the audience would feel cheated.

Cosmopolitanstill uses cover layout conventions and takes note of page real estate, withthe word ‘ Sexy’ – a word synonymous with what people expect of Cosmopolitancontent – written in a large font in the top left hand corner. There is alsothe use of numbers in the top left hand corner, and even a circle in the area -a tool used in shops to mark sale or special items, the red circle has become asymbol of the ‘ good deal’. This real estate formula of putting the items mostattractive to buyers in this area was due to product placement, but is not asnecessary as it used to be. Before magazines where overlapped on the newsstandsand their only exposed area was the top left hand corner. Now larger magazineslike Cosmopolitan are given premium space on magazine stands in shops like W HSmith, and the whole front cover is visible. However, making use of page realestate is still valid if you take into account that people generally read fromtop to bottom, left to right.

Content

Cosmopolitan has seven main sections:

Celebs

New & Real Life

Love, Sex & Success

Youniverse

Health

Shops

Every Month

The ‘ celeb’ section only has four features andthere is notably no features section. Instead the magazine is verycompartmentalised with standard pages like Cosmo Money, Cosmo Careers andCheat’s Guide. Cosmopolitan is ultimately a service magazine. It offers a lotof advice and how-to information. Where there are features, the focus onreal-life stories, which often have a sensational element.

This paired with the colloquial use of languagecreates intimacy. Not only is Cosmo your friend, it’s a life manual; it is anecessary element in the reader’s life. This element of necessity of key in themarketing strategy of the magazine, and also the overruling strategy of itsparent company, Natmags, which publishes other manual-like titles includingGood Housekeeping and Men’s Health.

It also has a ‘ Cosmo Offers’ section. This month, the offers consist of 20% off at Oasis. Affiliation with particular shops is anewer magazine promotion convention; it gives the reader an added motive to buythe magazine, and broadens the scope of the magazine’s ethos, by including theconnotations of the shop they have chosen to be associated with.

Layout/visual

In an effort to reclaim the top spot, Cosmopolitan has copied Glamour’s handbag size. The have also copied otherlayout elements from Glamour magazine, like the information strip at the top ofthe magazine. They do still produce the magazine in their larger A4 format. Forthe May edition, the A4 version had a free book, while the smaller version hadno free gift. This could work adversely for Cosmopolitan, as it implies thatthe larger version is less valuable and so needs the book to justify the price.

Price

Cosmopolitan have opted for premium pricing, at2. 95. There doesn’t seem to be clear justification for this price, consideringGlamour, the market leader is a pound cheaper at 1. 95, and Marie Claire, whichis rated just behind Cosmopolitan, is now 2. 50. Considering Cosmopolitanappeals to the everyday aspect of its audience and doesn’t by into fantasy viacelebrity, they make price themselves out of the market. For a magazine aboutthe real world, the price comes across as unrealistic.

Advertising

Cosmopolitan has earned a reputation for beingshocking and sensational through sexual politics. This has often beenrepresented in its advertising campaigns. In 2002 the magazine embarked on anad campaign that had visual ambiguous images. On was of an open fake fur bagwith pink satin lining; another was a woman in a bikini with a thin stream ofwhite liquid running down her stomach and another was a lipstick that was shotto look like a vibrator.

Extreme tactics like the ones mentioned above arenecessary for a magazine like Cosmopolitan. Many sexual taboos no longer existin current society; without them there is no need for Cosmopolitan. There adcampaigns prove we still have problems with sexual themes, and thus validatethe need for the magazine.

The May edition of Cosmopolitan has 300 pages(304 including front and back cover). Of these, 122 pages are advertising, excluding classifieds and Cosmopolitan’s own adverts. According to McCracken (1993, p91): It is no longer appropriate to assume that the magazineis only useful for advertising food and cleaning products. The magazine needsto increase the range of products it advertises to ensure consistent andongoing revenue.

Brand Expansion

Some believe that modern society has broken sodecisively from the past we have lost the certainty of the past and no longerhave traditions to live by. Without traditions we have no idea of how to live. Brands, however, can provide us with a substitute to traditions: brands havebecome the new traditions – they shape and give meaning to everyday lives -brands are the new traditions in our society. (Grant, 1999)

Cosmopolitan have strived to create a brand, through extended products. They have associated magazines: Cosmo Girl! andCosmo Bride; they have their own awards, which is an extension of theirposition to recommend people and products; and they also have a lingerie line. On top of this, their cover mounts are often branded. For the A4 May edition, the free book is an edited version of a book that has not yet been released, and has Cosmopolitan edition written on it.

Overview/conclusion

Cosmopolitan have maintained their politicalstance and prove that there is still a need for what some might call a femininepolitical crusade with the use of shocking sexual advertising and the recentcoverage of the general election. These have marketing strategies andpromotional strategies that it has employed since its launch in the 1970s. However, with social changes, and the reader’s new love affair with celebrity -which is not just fuelled by other women’s glossies, but also by the influx ofwomen’s weeklies – Cosmopolitan will need to do more to regain it’s position asmost read women’s magazine.

Reference

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