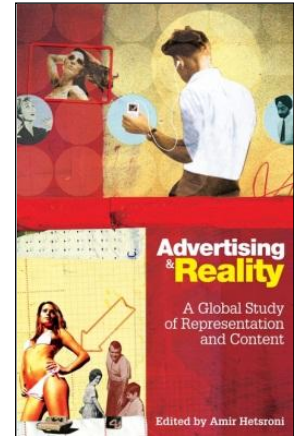


Amir Hetsroni (Ed.), *Advertising and Reality: A Global Study of Representation and Content*, New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, 277 pp., \$120.00 (hardcover), \$34.99 (paperback).

Janelle Applequist
The Pennsylvania State University

Amir Hetsroni's edited work, *Advertising and Reality: A Global Study of Representation and Content*, tackles the difficult task of presenting research on a field that vastly changes according to geographical and cultural borders with great success. Rather than focus on merely the effectiveness of advertising, Hetsroni collected work from a range of authors that extends questions regarding the representation of "reality" in advertising globally, with a thesis statement aiming to cover the facets of reality in everyday life, as portrayed through advertising. To that point, the author successfully acquired chapters that utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures in a way that privileges the many definitions which may exist for "reality," depending on where one sits in the world. Various nations, cultures, and relationships are considered in this book, giving the reader a vast amount of information that sparks lively questions and further debate.



Reality in advertising is categorized according to (a) views, times and places, (b) demography, and (c) gender, effectively dividing the book into three sections arranged sequentially by these categories. It offers 14 chapters that each present a review of advertising research, while raising new and important questions to be addressed in future scholarly work. Part I of the book includes chapters that discuss such issues as morality, how advertisements construct individuals to enter a normative structure whereby their global identities can be bought and sold, how translation amongst global advertising is disintegrating, and even how nostalgia is underutilized in advertising. Appropriately placed as the book's introduction, this first section effectively and succinctly gets to the point of what advertising means for us as global individuals, as well as what it means for more specific localities, citing various nations such as Israel, Japan, and the United States. Part II of the book comprises three chapters focusing on the people who are featured in advertisements worldwide, whether these groups are underrepresented, and the ways in which celebrities are being used to sell lifestyles and products. The final part of Hetsroni's edited work offers a more simplistic and direct discussion of gender issues as seen via advertising, looking at issues of fashion, sexuality, and body positioning in the field.

One strength of *Advertising and Reality* is its broad definition of advertising. Print, broadcast, radio, and Internet advertisements are considered across various studies. The chapters selected offer a significant sampling of advertising perspectives, addressing such concepts as globalization, theology, identity, marketing of narrative, value systems, translation studies, morality, fashion, hegemony, cultural imperialism, and hybridity and stereotype constructions. These concepts can often be difficult to define, yet the authors did a superb job of presenting information in a way that would be understandable and applicable by an undergraduate, scholarly, or professional audience. Perhaps one confusing issue for the

reader of this book is its use of "reality" in the title. Although connections can be made by the reader to the research presented and how it impacts their own reality, the book's title seems to promise more. Instead, this work can be best understood as a compilation of research on perceptions of international advertising—for our perceptions cannot always be equated with reality. This edited work is refreshing in that it can be extremely useful for a variety of audiences. Another of the book's main strengths is that each chapter poses content-specific discussion questions, which would be extremely useful and engaging for undergraduate students studying advertising, communications, business, or even public relations. The discussion questions offer a form of summary for each chapter, while forcing the reader to draw connections between the research findings, their locality, and the world at large. Individual chapters may be more useful for certain class lectures as opposed to using the entire book as a course text. However, it is clear that the research addressed throughout the book relates to concepts and approaches explained in subsequent chapters. Each chapter builds off the next, allowing one to reiterate concepts previously learned while building on the current topic. The text is also effective in that it, perhaps unintentionally, offers a normative approach for the current state of advertising from multiple areas of the world. Rather than present evidence that places the industry in a purely negative light, much of the research in the book emphasizes what advertisers are doing right; often times it even offers suggestions that could be used by the industry itself in terms of its creation and how global citizens can best be represented in an era that is so consumer-centric. While many texts that claim to be international may really have an underlying Western bias toward the inclusion of U.S.-centered research, Hetsroni chose authors from a variety of disciplines and geographic locations to leave little to the imagination.

The writing of the text is clear, understandable, and engaging—devoid of much of the academic jargon that can so easily be misconstrued. A common theme revisited throughout the book deals with the limited versions of morality that advertising presents. As discussed in the book's opening chapter, "Mass Moralizing," by Phil Hopkins, advertisements are constructed in a way that instructs consumers to become part of a larger system, whereby their "truth" or "self" can be bought and sold. Issues of this commodification are woven throughout the text in ways that allow the reader to engage with their own advertising experiences, whether they be in the classroom, at work, or in a more personal setting. Another of the book's strengths rests in its attention to often underrepresented populations in research. Chapter 8's "Seeing Ourselves as the Adman Sees Us? The Representation and Portrayal of Older People in Advertising," by Peter Simcock, investigates the concept of ageism in advertising and its impact on potentially negative stereotyping of older populations in a way that transfers into society. By raising questions surrounding research done on advertising content, Simcock allows the reader to raise questions about stereotypes that different cultures have in relation to aging populations, a group that is often not glamorized via advertisements. Chapter 12's "Sex Sells, but to Whom and at What Price? Sexual Images of African American and Caucasian Women in Magazine Advertising," by Linda Godbold Kean and Shekinah Thomas, is a fascinating look at the use of women in advertising and the implications that particular body positioning can have. The chapter also raises important questions for the fields of advertising and research, taking a closer look at the ways in which fashion can be misunderstood as sexuality, and why fashion should be researched in a more critical way. Of course, this text is an effective mode of discussion for topics such as this, as fashion is defined differently according to various nations and cultures.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the book would be the third section that focuses on gender; however, the few chapters included here seem to address sex as opposed to more complex issues associated with gender studies, such as cultural norms, geographical expectations related to gender, and equality. Instead, the section emphasized racy content, leaving the reader to wonder why this section was not titled "sexuality." Furthermore, it would have been useful to read about portrayals of men in advertising instead of emphasizing only the female body in research. The gender section of the book chose research that emphasized Western conceptions of gender, including feminine placement of the female body in advertisements and the absence of a robust discussion on masculinity.

If organized differently, for example, by geographical area, *Advertising and Reality* may have been more easily navigable by the reader. That being said, the book as a whole effectively addresses a variety of issues in advertising from a vast number of angles, proving to be an interesting and informative portrayal of global advertising studies. It is certainly difficult for an editorial work to address all issues facing an industry from an international perspective; yet Hetsroni successfully compiles the research, organizing it in a way that compels readers to ask questions of their own culture's work and how that relates to the world on a larger scale. The book engages us in a way that inevitably raises questions surrounding the consumer's role in advertising as well. Advertisements themselves are not to be studied in a vacuum; audience interpretations of them are important and necessary as well, as argued throughout this book's chapters. By doing this, the text is extremely profound and should be well-received by its readers.