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### What Are Fragrance Commercials Really Selling?

As I sit on my couch absentmindedly watching television, an image on the screen captures my attention. Before me stands a gorgeous woman draped in a flowing, gauzy gown, staring deeply at her unseen audience. The screen flashes images of her long neck, her dark eyes, and her golden legs. It then closes in on her delicate hands as she slowly runs them down the soft curves of her body. Intense and hypnotic music fills the silence as the woman arches her back and gently tilts her head, causing shining dark hair to cascade in thick waves around her shoulders. In the background I see the silhouette of a man. He sits on a bed wrapped in silk sheets, his bare chest exposing sharp angles of defined muscle. His eyes are locked intently on the goddess before him, completely entranced by her beauty.

As this erotic scene unfolds on my television, I wonder what the advertisement could possibly be selling. Then in the last few seconds of the commercial the woman utters in a sultry whisper the name of a designer perfume and before us dances a glistening vile containing this seductive elixir.

Judging by the glamorous and seductive nature of the woman in the ad one might assume men would be the target audience. However, it is not so much the woman herself but what she represents that the advertisers are selling. She emulates power, beauty and sensuality, which are all things women crave to feel themselves. This specific type of marketing is extremely consistent among fragrance commercials. Almost all of them depict stunning women adorned in

dazzling and promiscuous clothing. Often times the scene unfolding around them is one of majestic beauty and erotic mystery, such as diamonds raining from the sky, or orange and pink clouds swirling around creating a dream like atmosphere. These enchanting images create a sense of wonder and desire. They make the viewer believe anything is possible. Through these subliminal messages the fragrance companies ensure us that if we simply purchase the fragrance we will be desirable like these women and will have the power they wield.

In almost all cases these commercials teach us absolutely nothing about the actual product. Sure, every now the ad might feature a woman holding a rose or show a scene where impossibly large lilies blossom everywhere the woman steps. These images give a brief glimpse of how the fragrance might smell. But, in most cases the advertisers rely solely on getting our emotions involved. Instead of selling consumers a perfume that smells like vanilla and freesias, they are selling a product that will make women feel mysterious, sexy and sophisticated.

How effective is this type of marketing? Shopping for a new fragrance is a difficult and daunting mission. There are hundreds of sparkling bottles in all different shapes and sizes, colors ranging from gold to deep purple. It is a sensory overloaded task that quickly becomes exhausting. The sales person sprays perfume after perfume on little white cards for the shopper to sample. Very quickly the scents start to smell the same and it becomes almost impossible to separate the good ones from the bad. However, if we remember the commercial for a certain fragrance we can give that one a try. Even if the perfume doesn't smell much different than the rest this is the one we are more likely to buy because of the association the advertisement has created. These fragrance companies ensure women that if they wear their perfumes they will become sexier, more sophisticated and appealing to those around them. Advertisers rely on the

cultural myth that deep down every woman longs to feel sexy and desirable. Therefore, if these companies can offer an easy solution to that yearning, why wouldn't women buy it?