



5-2014

Analysis of Automobile Advertisements in American Magazines

Asnika Bajracharya
Gettysburg College

Lukwesa K. Morin
Gettysburg College

Kendall H. Radovich
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship

 Part of the [Advertising and Promotion Management Commons](#), [American Popular Culture Commons](#), [Environmental Sciences Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Bajracharya, Asnika; Morin, Lukwesa K.; and Radovich, Kendall H., "Analysis of Automobile Advertisements in American Magazines" (2014). *Student Publications*. 225.

https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship/225

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/student_scholarship/225

This open access student research paper is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Analysis of Automobile Advertisements in American Magazines

Abstract

The automobile is one of the most important products in American consumer culture. Throughout the history of the automobile industry in America, advertising has been an important strategy for marketing automobiles and their features to consumers on a mass scale. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how print (magazine) automobile advertisements have changed through time (1960-2013) and across different genres of magazines: general (National Geographic, New Yorker), male-oriented (Esquire), female-oriented (Cosmopolitan), and ethnic (Ebony). The trends that we examined included: numbers and proportions of car advertisements, relative numbers of domestic and foreign car advertisements, and the mix of automobile features. We found that the total number of car advertisements per magazine peaked in the late 1990s overall, with differences among the magazine genres. The number of advertisements for cars produced by American manufacturers peaked in the mid-1990s. The number of foreign car advertisements significantly increased after 1975, with Japanese cars leading this group. We discuss the trends in advertising parameters over time and across magazine genres in light of changes in buyer attitudes, including attitudes towards the environment.

Keywords

automobile, advertisements, assembly line, magazines, foreign

Disciplines

Advertising and Promotion Management | American Popular Culture | American Studies | Environmental Sciences | Tourism and Travel

Comments

Environmental Studies Thesis

Analysis of Automobile Advertisements in American Magazines

Asnika Bajracharya, Lulu Morin, and Kendall Radovich

“Americans love and need their motor vehicles -- for work, business and pleasure”
- Davis (2012)

Abstract

The automobile is one of the most important products in American consumer culture.

Throughout the history of the automobile industry in America, advertising has been an important strategy for marketing automobiles and their features to consumers on a mass scale. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how print (magazine) automobile advertisements have changed through time (1960-2013) and across different genres of magazines: general (*National Geographic, New Yorker*), male-oriented (*Esquire*), female-oriented (*Cosmopolitan*), and ethnic (*Ebony*). The trends that we examined included: numbers and proportions of car advertisements, relative numbers of domestic and foreign car advertisements, and the mix of automobile features. We found that the total number of car advertisements per magazine peaked in the late 1990s overall, with differences among the magazine genres. The number of advertisements for cars produced by American manufacturers peaked in the mid-1990s. The number of foreign car advertisements significantly increased after 1975, with Japanese cars leading this group. The car feature focus in the advertisement varied between *Cosmopolitan* and *Esquire*. Car advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* focused more on capacity and fuel-efficiency whereas, in *Esquire*, it focused more on comfort and capacity.

Introduction

Product marketing is one of the challenging tasks in the business world. In order to attract a large diverse of audience, marketers often advertise a single product in different ways, a technique known as advertisement variation (Nettelhorst & Youmans, 2012). Advertisement variation can be achieved in two ways: by making substantive changes in the factual information about the product and by making cosmetic changes that are unrelated to product (Nettelhorst & Youmans, 2012). For instance, Apple marketers make a substantive change when they advertise about new downloadable applications, whereas, they make cosmetic change when the advertisement focuses on a different musician using the new application (Nettelhorst & Youmans, 2012). In any kind of advertisement campaign, both substantive and cosmetic information can be altered, but the impact of these changes depends on the characteristics of the target audience. Studies have shown that audiences who have high motivation to learn about a product are more positively affected by the substantive variation, whereas audiences who have low motivation are more positively affected by the cosmetic variation (Nettelhorst & Youmans, 2012). Advertising not only plays a crucial role in selling a product but also has an influence on the economy and society as a whole. For example, advertisements manipulate and influence consumer patterns, which affect the product sales. Increase in product sales benefits the economy and vice-versa. Advertisements reinforce a mass consumer culture, particularly in regards to the automobile industry.

The automobile has been one of the most prominent products in the American consumer culture over time. The implementation of the assembly line introduced by Henry Ford during the early nineteenth century revolutionized the automobile manufacturing capacity of America. All of a sudden more number of automobiles was being manufactured in a more efficient manner.

Henry Ford also promoted the industrial revolution by increasing employee wages, bolstering the middle class and the modern economy. Soon owning cars became a part of the American dream and as the dream got bigger so did the sizes of the cars. Up until the oil crisis during the 1970s, big and powerful American automobiles were what sold the most. While most of the American automobiles were constructed on an assembly line in a much efficient manner, these vehicles were large in size with low mileage. The oil crisis had a significant impact in the American automobile industry, which led to the advent of foreign automakers such as the Japanese, the German, and the British. As the consumer demand and interest in compactness and fuel-efficiency increased with shortage of gasoline, foreign automobile sales surmounted that of the domestic. Import market shares within the U.S., immediately after WWII, were approximately 0.4% (Greuner et al., 2000). Today, these imports have increased, accounting for a quarter of existing market shares as a result of the oil crisis (Greuner et al., 2000).

Throughout the history of the automobile industry in America, advertising has been an ever-increasing strategy for automobile marketing. In the 1920s, increase in various forms of advertising such as magazines, radio broadcasting, and television allowed advertisements to reach a wider audience (Pope, 3, 2013). Marketing gurus know their target audience and are able to construct advertisements that reach out to people based on specific marketing niches. Since people's 'purchasing' behavior is influenced by desires for personal identification and social status, most automobile advertisements focus on cars as desirable self-images. "They are selling people their own dream" (Gibson, 2013).

Historically, automobile advertisements have generally targeted male customers. Only recently has this pattern change. During the post-World War II era, as the economy was rising and there was more space in the workforce and money, there was an increase in the number of

female drivers (Lezotte, 2012). According to Lezotte (2012), the rise in the number of female drivers, along with the freedom and mobility that came with, broke the stereotype of only men capable of driving cars. In an attempt to sustain the notion of masculinity and dominance in regards to car ownership and use, the automobile marketers reconfigured and advertised particular types of automobile as forms of domestic technology, and thus, allowed women to utilize it as a tool in fulfilling their role as a wife, mother, consumer and caretaker (Lezotte, 2012). This kind of advertisement strategy allowed the automakers to serve to the female customer without alienating their male customers. According to Lezotte (2012), automakers have worked to appeal to both men and women's biological natures by applying gendered aspects to automobiles and the technologies used. While large powerful cars were mostly advertised for male customers, minivans that are spacious, safe, and ideal for shopping, were targeted for female customers. As claimed by Lezotte, advertising from the postwar era confirms this marketing strategy. Print advertisements from the 1950s and 1960s promote automobiles such as station wagon, hatchback, and minivans as the transportation for families: spacious and reliable.

Over time, the automobile has become an important product in the American consumer culture and will continue to be in future. Extensive advertising campaigns for automobiles contributed millions of dollars to advertising agencies (Davis, 2012). The purpose of this study is to evaluate how print (magazine) automobile advertisements have changed through time (1960-2013) and across different genres of magazines.

Methods

The different genres of magazines from which data were collected are: general (*National Geographic*, *New Yorker*), male-oriented (*Esquire*), female-oriented (*Cosmopolitan*), and ethnic (*Ebony*). The original intent was to collect data from two magazines for each genre. However,

getting access to archives for gender specific magazines, especially female-oriented magazines, for the entire 1960-2013 issue was very difficult because a lot of the libraries, including the Gettysburg library, started to collect archive for these magazines only recently. Therefore, we only have one magazine for the male-oriented and the female-oriented categories. The five magazines selected for data collection serves as case studies rather than large unbiased samples.

We used online source, paper copies, and microfilm as our magazine archive sources. The online archives served as an initial approach to collecting all of the data. However, there were a handful of problems encountered with the online archives. Many of the online archives do not display the entire magazine content. For example, some of the online archives had only the magazine articles and lacked advertisements, whereas, some of them had only a selected number of advertisements. Additionally, many online archives were expensive to access through subscription. Although paper copies serve as an ideal archive source, we were not able to access the full time period (1960-2013) of intended data collection because the Gettysburg library did not have all. We tried to use interlibrary loan facility at the Gettysburg library but because of the huge volume of paper copies required our request was cancelled. We were able to access the magazines archives in online and microfilm (PowerScan 2000 3.23 program and ScanPro 2000 machine) format at the Bucknell University library and the Gettysburg College library. However, we also encountered some issues with the microfilm. Since the information in the microfilm is stored in black and white format, the quality of information was difficult to decipher. A lot of the vital information, such as the background, text, and the people in the car advertisements, were lost due to the high contrast of the image (Figure 1). This inhibited the study from including a handful of the original categories, like background analysis of the car advertisements and the race of the people featured in the car advertisements.

The *New Yorker* was chosen as a gender-neutral magazine geared toward the general public. The first issue of *The New Yorker* was in February 21, 1925 and was founded by Harold Ross (About Us The New Yorker, 2013). It is a weekly magazine providing insight to “politics and culture, humor and cartoons, fiction and poetry, and reviews and criticism” (About Us The New Yorker, 2013). The second gender-neutral magazine that we used was *National Geographic*. The National Geographic Society was founded in 1888 and the first issue of *National Geographic* (magazine) was in October 1888 (About Us National Geographic, 2014). National Geographic Society is a major nonprofit scientific and educational organization; it has funded over 11,000 scientific studies, conservation and expedition projects around the world (About Us National Geographic, 2014). *Cosmopolitan* was chosen to represent female oriented magazines. *Cosmopolitan* had started as a family magazine, with its first issue published in 1886 (About Us Cosmopolitan, 2014). However, the magazine, which today is popularly known as *Cosmo*, has drastically changed its focus over time (About Us Cosmopolitan, 2014). Although the magazine originally started as a family magazine for women with articles mostly focusing on fashion, home and domestic aspects of such as family, childcare, and cooking, it has shifted its focus to fashion, health, and the notion of ‘independent women’ (About Us Cosmopolitan, 2014). The *Esquire* was chosen to represent male oriented magazines. *Esquire* started as a male apparel trade magazine, with its first issue in October 1993 (The Masthead, 2014). The magazine primarily focuses on men in contemporary American culture in areas of politics, health, fashion and the arts (The Masthead, 2014). *Ebony* was chosen to represent African American focused magazines. The first issue of *Ebony* was published in November 1945 (About Ebony, 2014). The

magazine primarily focuses in promoting empowerment, ambition, and dialog in the African-American community (About Ebony, 2014).

We collected data for every August edition per year per magazine with the exception of one 2014 May edition of *Cosmo*. We chose the August edition in particular assuming that most of the new car models debut during the fall season. Therefore, in our study August month represents the fall season. Although we tried to obtain archives for each magazine from 1960 to 2013, due to limited time and available resources we were only able to access a limited range of years. The range of years for which we were able to access the archives are: *National Geographic* (1960-1973, 1975, 1977-1980, 1982-1983, 1985, and 1987-2013), *The New Yorker* (1960-1933), *Cosmopolitan* (1960-1984), *Esquire* (1965-1969 and 1973-2013), and *Ebony* (1970-2011). Overall we had ten categories per year per magazine: total number of pages, total number of advertisements, total number of car advertisements, car make and model, manufacturer (country), background description of car advertisement (mountain, house, city, lake, etc), car feature focus, people in the advertisement (male, female, children, no people, and family), and size of car advertisement (full page, half page, less than half page). In our study, car feature focus is defined as various features of a car such as luxury, comfort, and safety, highlighted in a car advertisement. For the car feature focus category, we had nine subcategories: comfort (luxury, nice interior/ exterior, style of car), capability (smooth, quiet, precise, technology and engine power), safety (air bags and brake system), fuel efficiency (great mileage, sustainability, hybrid cars), large size, affordability, compact size (small cars), ruggedness (outdoors/ off road), and sporty). The data collection process was extremely time consuming, which took approximately one and a half hours per edition and therefore at least 36 hours issue.

The trends that were examined were: total number of car advertisements per issue, proportion of car advertisements per issue, car advertisements per number of pages per issue, number of domestic and foreign car advertisements per issue, and car feature focus of the car advertisement per issue. We created a line graph for all four trends as a function of time for each magazine and for all five magazines combined.

Results

Total Number of Car Advertisements: All Five Magazines (Figure 2)

There were low numbers of car advertisements between 1960-1970 for all magazines combined. The number of car advertisements for all five magazines indicated that the highest number of car advertisements was found in the years 1978 and 1998 with a total of twenty-five advertisements per issue.

For *Cosmo*, the graph shows that there were no automobile advertisements between 1960-1973. Although the graph shows an increasing trend for the total number of car advertisements from 1974-1984, the data collected for the May 2014 issue has zero car advertisements. Therefore we can no longer assume that the increasing trend till 1984 persists along time. In the earlier and latter years of *The New Yorker*, the number of car advertisements fluctuates at a low frequency with an increase in around the 70s and 80s. In *National Geographic*, the total number of car advertisements per issue fluctuates at a low frequency until the late 90s. For *Esquire*, although the number of car advertisements fluctuates over time, compared to the number of car advertisements in *Cosmo*, the total number of car advertisement overall is greater. For *Ebony*, car advertisements starts to shown up only after the 70s, which slowly increase and peaks in 1998, with a total of fourteen advertisements for that year. Overall,

Ebony has the highest number of car advertisements for a given year among all of the five magazines.

Proportion of Car Advertisements (Figure 4)

Although there is a fluctuating trend in the proportion of car advertisements per year for all of the five individual magazines, in figure 4 the trend is not apparent, except in *National Geographic*, because the graph compares the trends in all of the five magazines with the same vertical axis. On Average *National Geographic* has the largest proportion of car advertisements compared to all the other magazines. The proportion of advertisements in *National Geographic* oscillates between 1983-1999. The highest peak, 0.57, in proportion of car advertisement is seen in in 1989.

Car Advertisements per Number of Pages per Magazine (Figure 5)

The total number of pages per magazine fluctuated at a low range for *Cosmo*, *National Geographic* and *Ebony*. The highest proportion of car advertisements per number of pages in *Cosmo* was 0.013 in 1977 and 1978. *National Geographic* had a spike of 0.069-0.05 between the years 1997-1999; *Ebony* peaks at 0.06 in 1998. Therefore, for these two magazines, there is a slow rise until the late 1990s. *Esquire* followed an opposite trend and peaks earlier in 1978 at 0.11, maintaining a relatively low proportion of car advertisements per number of pages per magazine in the latter years. *The New Yorker* had much more sporadic results. The proportion of number of car advertisements per number of pages per magazine was much greater at around 0.05-0.06 between 1971-1978 with the exception of 1977, which had zero.

Number of domestic and foreign car advertisement: All five magazines (Figure 6)

Apart from American car advertisements, the foreign car advertisements found were: Japanese, South Korean, Italian, French, German, British, and Swedish. Around the mid 1960s,

most of the car advertisements were German, Italian, and American. However, around the mid 1970s there was a sudden increase in Japanese and British car advertisements. Although the Japanese car advertisements peaked in 1978, with a total of eight advertisements in all five magazines, it sharply dropped to zero in 1980. Later on in 1982, it again picked up speed with four advertisements, but the average number of car advertisement between 1982-2013 remained at a constant low compared to the peak in 1978. The number of British car advertisements however, gradually declined after the mid 1970s. The number of German car advertisements increased slightly around the mid-1970s, but gradually decreased after the late 1980s. There was a slight increase in the number of British car advertisements during the early 2000s. Other foreign car advertisements such as South Korean, French, and Swedish had a very low number of car advertisement compared to the American, Japanese, German, and British car advertisements. Overall, the highest number of car advertisements across time (1960-2013) was from American car manufacturing companies. There is a clear increasing trend in the number of American car advertisements from 1960-1998, with a peak of fourteen advertisements in 1998. Although the number of American car advertisements began to decline after late 1990s, it was still higher than the number of foreign car advertisements. Coming close to the numbers of American car advertisements was the numbers of Japanese car advertisements. The number of car advertisements from both of these manufacturing countries follows a similar curve pattern that peaks around the late 1990s. However, there are two exceptions to this trend. First, during the mid 1980s, the number of American car advertisements was almost double of that of the number of Japanese car advertisements. Second, between 2011-2013, there was a significant increase in the number of Japanese car advertisements, whereas, there was a decrease in the number of American car advertisements.

Number of domestic and foreign car advertisements for individual magazines (Figure 7)

For *Cosmo*, the foreign car advertisements found were: Japanese, British, and French. Japanese car advertisements appeared the earliest, starting from 1974, compared to American and other foreign car advertisements. The number of Japanese car advertisements peak in 1977 with a total of three car advertisements. However, the number of Japanese car advertisements gradually decreased after 1977 and maintained a constant number of advertisements from 1981-1984. American car advertisements began to appear only from 1978 onwards; the latest compared to all other foreign car advertisements. The number of American car advertisements peak in 1984 with a total of three advertisements. Few British and French car advertisements appeared around the late 1970s and completely disappear after 1980.

For *The New Yorker*, we found car advertisements from all of the seven foreign automakers. Starting from 1960, American car advertisements appeared the earliest compared to all other foreign car advertisements. The number of American car advertisements fluctuates between zero to two between 1960-1993. The Japanese car advertisements, however, appeared in 1974, which was much later than the American car advertisements. It fluctuates subtly and peak with three car advertisements in 1977. German car advertisements appeared momentarily at a constant rate between 1965-1980 but disappeared between 1981-1988. The number of German car advertisements appeared again during the 90s. British and Swedish car advertisements follow a similar trend till the early 80s but then completely disappear after that.

For *National Geographic*, only four of the foreign car advertisements were found: Japanese, South Korean, German, and British. Most of the car advertisements in *National Geographic* were from American automakers followed closely by Japanese automakers. The number of American car advertisements peak in 1998 and slowly tapers off in the early 2000s.

The number of Japanese car advertisements started to appear only after 1987 and maintained an average constant number of car advertisements throughout the 90s and 2000s. The number of South Korean, German, and British car advertisements were relatively very small and appeared occasionally in the 90s and 2000s.

For *Esquire*, six foreign car advertisements were found: Japanese, South Korean, Italian, German, British, and Swedish. Most of the car advertisements in *Esquire* were from American, Japanese, and German automakers. The American car advertisement appeared early on from 1965 and fluctuated throughout the time scale. The Japanese car advertisement appeared only after 1973 and followed a similar trend to that of the American car advertisements. Following up close to the number of American and Japanese car advertisements was the number of German car advertisements. Although the number of German car advertisements fluctuated a lot from 1965-2013, the total number of car advertisement compared to American and Japanese car advertisements was relatively low. The total number of British, South Korean, Swedish, and Italian car advertisement appeared occasionally and did not appear to have a distinct trend.

For *Ebony*, only three foreign car advertisements were found: Japanese, German, and Swedish. Most of the car advertisements in *Ebony* were from American automakers. The number of American car advertisement peaked between the late 1990s to the early 2000s. However, the number of advertisements drastically declined from 2009-2013. The Japanese car advertisements appeared only after 1978. Between 1985-2002, the number of Japanese car advertisements fluctuated between zero and four. Although the Japanese car advertisements disappeared between 2003-2010, some advertisements were seen in 2011 and 2012. The German and Swedish car advertisements appeared occasionally around the 2000s but in a far less number compared to the American and Japanese car advertisements.

Car Features focus of the car advertisements per year per magazine (Figures 8 and 9)

For *Cosmo*, most of the car advertisements focused on fuel efficiency and capacity, closely followed by sportiness (Figure 8). There were some focus on safety and affordability, but these were relatively small compared to the focus on fuel efficiency and capacity. For *Esquire*, comfortable and capacity were the two main highlighted car features in the advertisement (Figure 9).

Discussion

For more than a century the automobile has been associated with masculinity and mobility (Lezotte, 2012). For *Esquire*, comfortable and capacity were the two main highlighted car features in the advertisement instead of large size, which might be because *Esquire* skews toward a male audience of higher socioeconomic status than the average male magazine. Therefore, style, luxury, design, performance, and comfort, all of which are included in comfortable and capacity, are more focused. However, for *Cosmo*, most of the car feature was on fuel efficiency (great mileage, sustainability, hybrid cars) and capability (quality, smooth, quiet, precise, technology, and engine power) instead of safety and compact size. This might be attributed to the fact that *Cosmo*, unlike most of the traditional female-oriented magazines, is a radical magazine, which focuses on the notion of the 'independent women'. All twelve of the car advertisements from *Cosmo* promoted features and styles such as small compact, sedans, and sports cars. These cars also represent a symbol of women's empowerment, which is one of the main focuses of *Cosmo*. According to Vicki Poponi, head of product planning for American Honda Motor Co. that for buyers under 35, women tend to purchase cars for reasons such as reliability and fuel economy, whereas men are more compelled to purchase cars based on the

exterior styling and more exciting driving qualities (Copeland, 2013). Men tend to be more emotionally driven, according to Poponi and women tend to be more sensible (Copeland, 2013).

The women's movement of 1970s increased the number of women in the workforce in record numbers (Lezotte, 2012). Up until the early 1970s, most automobile advertisements were intended for a male audience, exhibiting a gendered bias about women as drivers (Ellen, 2014). An increased need for the automobile amongst women developed in order to contribute to the intensified labor participation. According to Charles Sanford, "each stage of life begets its own characteristic kind of car, one that hopefully signifies an upward social progress" (Lezotte, 2012). Our result for *Cosmo* shows that the number of car advertisements start to emerge only during the mid 1970s, which is when the women's movement was starting to pick up speed. In addition, a lot of the foreign car advertisements, especially by Japanese, British, and French, appeared earlier compared to the American car advertisement, which indicates the low interest of the American automakers in female customers compared to the foreign automakers. Overall, our result on the car feature focus for *Esquire* and *Cosmo* does show a gender bias, which is also related to the socio economic status of the audience targeted by the magazine.

Furthermore, enveloped in the history of the automobile is the story of African-Americans persistent struggle for freedom and equality (Surge, 2005). In the late 19th century throughout the civil rights revolution (1950's and 1960's), American blacks suffered from mistreatment such as legal segregation in buses, streetcars and trains (Surge, 2005). However, as the struggle for equality persisted, cars had become "battlegrounds over the future of racial equality" (Surge, 2005). Many blacks moved north and integrated into part of the urban working class. This increased their income and their demand for cars (Surge, 2005). In the post-World War II years, car companies began to focus on black consumer advertising in magazines such as

Ebony. *Ebony* magazine estimated that 20% of black households aimed to buy a car in the 1958 model year alone (Surge, 2005). Owning a car became a powerful symbol of status for African Americans, and ads mainly targeted sports or luxury features of cars (Surge, 2005). Our result for *Ebony* shows that approximately 25 % of the total car advertisements were luxury cars such as Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, and Audi. There was a 10% increase in the luxury cars advertisement between the 80s and 90s. Even in the post-Motown era of “blaxploitation” films, the emergence of gangsta rap and hip-hop in the 1980’s and 1990’s perpetuated the idea that cars maintain a special status in black popular culture (Surge, 2005). These cars serve as a symbol of the American “good-life” and are typically low riding; hot rods pimped out in chrome and gold trimming (Surge, 2005).

Similar to *Ebony*, which had the greatest number of car advertisements in 1998, the largest number of cars for *National Geographic* also peaked around in 1997-1998. Our result for *National Geographic* shows that in 1997 six out of ten of the total car advertisements and in 1998 five out nine total car advertisements were from GM. In 1998, GM had nine new-vehicle introductions that drew a large sum of media dollars of about \$400 million (Endicott, 1998). Media outlays for all advertisers hit \$38.1 billion in 1998, increasing by 9.7% over first-half '97 (Endicott, 1998), which might explain the peak in total number of car advertisement in 1998 in booth *Ebony* and *National Geographic*. Sales for luxury vehicles rose as a direct result of the economy; the “image-conscious” baby boomers were the primary consumers of these luxe sport-utility vehicles (Endicott, 1998). Our result for the car feature focus during the 90s for the entire five magazines shows a 15 % increase in luxury car advertisements between the 1980s and 1990s. According to Advertising Age's 43rd annual report on the 100 Leading National Advertisers, General Motors became the nation's leading advertiser in 1998 (Endicott, 1998).

The automotive industry became the first advertiser to break \$3 billion in annual ad spending; GM was the nation's largest spender in magazines and network TV (Endicott, 1998). GM's U.S. advertising reached \$3.09 billion, which was a 29.9% increase from the previous year (Endicott, 1998).

Overall, for all five magazines combined, there was a sudden rise in the number of foreign car advertisements after 1979, coming mainly from Japanese car companies, and followed closely by British and German car companies (Figure 5). This sudden increase in the number of foreign car advertisements may have been attributed to the effect of the oil crisis during the mid 1970s. The oil crisis of 1974 and 1975 led to a sharp rise in gasoline prices, resulting in a major economic hit within the automotive industry (Lord and Saito, 2010). Studies have shown that the rise in gasoline prices pushed a lot of consumers away from large and low mileage American cars, and towards smaller, more fuel efficient foreign cars such as the Japanese and German cars (Lord and Saito, 2010). This trend was reinforced by the second oil crisis in 1979, following the Iranian revolution. Both of these oil crises created a favorable market entry path for the foreign car manufacturing companies, especially the Japanese companies (Figure 6). In *Cosmo*, *National Geographic*, and *The New Yorker*, Japanese car sales sharply increase in late 1970's and fluctuate thereafter (Figure 6). As sales dropped for American cars during the oil crisis in 1973, a distinct increase in the number of American car advertisements became apparent. This strongly suggests a strategy utilized to persuade consumers to buy more cars during the mid-1970s.

The number of Japanese car advertisements closely follows the American car advertisement trend mostly throughout the mid-1970s to 2010, with the exception of a small mistake during the early 1980s. The American automakers pressured the government to slow the

influx of the Japanese cars, while encouraging Japanese automakers to buy parts from the American suppliers to equalize the trade (Lord and Saito, 2010). As a result, Japanese automakers signed a Voluntary Restraint Agreement (VRA) between 1981-1988, which drastically reduced the number of Japanese car import during this period (Lord and Saito, 2010). The dip in total Japanese car advertisements for all five magazines may very well be the result of the VRA. Japanese car sales peak after 1979, and sharply decline after the 1981 VRA agreement was signed. We then observe a steady rise as Japan began exporting limited shares of high end and expensive vehicles (Figure 6). Although the VRA remained in force until 1992, after 1988, the Japanese firms were exporting less than the agreed quota. According to Lord and Saito (2010), the steady reduction of Japanese car imports by firms may be because most of the imported Japanese cars are now comparatively cheaper and are fuel efficient luxury models. The overall reduction of the number of Japanese car imports during the 1990s and 2000s might be a possible explanation for the relatively constant low number of Japanese car advertisements during the 1990s and 2000s (Figure 6).

Additionally, automobile advertising in America has all been linked through print media and television. More recently, however, advertising and automakers have acclimated to the digital age. Among the decline of the magazine industry, news magazines have suffered the most (Sasseen et al., 2014). The number of print ad pages sold has sharply declined and the Publishers Information Bureau discovered that the total ad pages for the 211 magazines tracked fell by 8.2 %, to 150,699 for the year 2012 (Sasseen et al., 2014). This was a more drastic decline than the 3.1% drop in 2011(Sasseen et al., 2014). Our results indicate a low number of car advertisements in the 2013 edition of *The New Yorker*. Compared to other news articles in the study, only *The New Yorker* had limited ad losses dropping to the single digits; however, it did

suffer in single copy sales (Sasseen et al., 2014). Lisa Hughes (*New Yorker* publisher) asserted that the relatively moderate fall reflected the magazine's unique positioning and brand, which draws loyal and affluent subscribers. She also affirmed that *The New Yorker's* increasing digital presence in recent years has helped maintain its print ad strength (Sasseen et al., 2014). The *New Yorker* now has the ability to use ad packages that combine print with tablet, web and iPhone advertisements (Sasseen et al., 2014). Automakers are not ditching traditional forms of media; however, they are certainly paying more attention to digital advertising and social media.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study analyzed the changes through time (1960-2013) and among different genres of magazines to show various trends in print (magazine) automobile advertisements. We determined that not only do car advertisements attempt to shape public outlook but also serve as a reflection of historical events and public attitudes toward the automobile. The focus on features within print car advertisements adapt to consumer demands and prefer ability over time, as indicated by the marked rise in print car advertisements from 1960-2014. The results also shed light upon the questions regarding overall patterns of change within automobile advertisements and have the potential to point the way for future research.

References

- About EBONY. *EBONY*. EBONY Magazine, 2014. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- About Us. *Cosmopolitan*. Hearst Communications, Inc., 2014. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- About Us -- National Geographic. *National Geographic*. National Geographic Society, 2014. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- About Us. *The New Yorker*. Condé Nast, 2013. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- Copeland, Libby. Baby, You Can't Drive: Why does the auto industry get women so wrong? *Slate Magazine*. The Slate Group. N.p., 2013.
- Davis, Marc. How The U.S. Automobile Industry Has Changed. *Investopedia*. N.p., 2012.
- Endicott, Craig. 43RD ANNUAL: GM KNOCKS P&G FROM TOP SPOT; ENDS PACKAGE-GOODS GIANT'S CONSECUTIVE STREAK AT 7: LEADERS SWELL SPENDING BY 8.6%, TO \$58 BILLION. *Advertising Age News RSS*. N.p., 1998.
- Ewen, Stuart. Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture. New York: *McGraw-Hill*. N.p., 1977.
- Gibson, Robert. Advertising: Marketing gurus know their target audiences are not natural consumers. *Alternatives Journal*. 39:2. p. 64. 2013.
- Greuner, Matthias R., David R. Kamerschen, and Peter G. Klein. The Competitive Effects of Advertising in the US Automobile Industry, 1970- 94. *International Journal of the Economics of Business* 7:3, p 245-61. 2000.
- Lezotte, Chris. The Evolution of the 'Chick Car' Or: What Came First, the Chick or the Car? *Journal of Popular Culture*. 45:3, p 516-531. 2012.
- Lord, Richard A., and Yoshie Saito. Effect of Exchange Rates and Gasoline Prices on US Imports of Japanese Automobiles. *The International Trade Journal* 24.2. 182-208. 2010.
- The Masthead. *Esquire.com Article*. Hearst Communications, Inc., 2014. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.
- Nettelhorst, Stephen C., and Robert J. Youmans. The Effects of Advertisement Variation and Need for Cognition on Attitudes toward Products. *The New School Psychology Bulletin*. 9:2, p 68-73. 2012.
- Pope, D. Making Sense of Advertisements, *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course*. N.p., 2013.

Sasseen, Jane, Katerina-Eva Matsa, and Amy Mitchell. News Magazines: Embracing Their Digital Future | State of the Media. News Magazines: Embracing Their Digital Future | State of the Media. *Pew Research Center*. N.p., 2014.

Surge, Thomas. Driving While Black: The Car and Race Relations in Modern America, Automobile in American Life and Society. *Dearborn: Henry Ford Museum*. N.p., 2005.

Young, Angelo. "Why GM's Double-Digit Growth Continued In November." *International Business Times*. IBT Media Inc., 2013. Web. 06 May 2014.

Appendix



Figure 1. Microfilm from the magazine *Esquire* to show the information lost due to the high contrast of the image such as the background, text, and the people in the car advertisements.

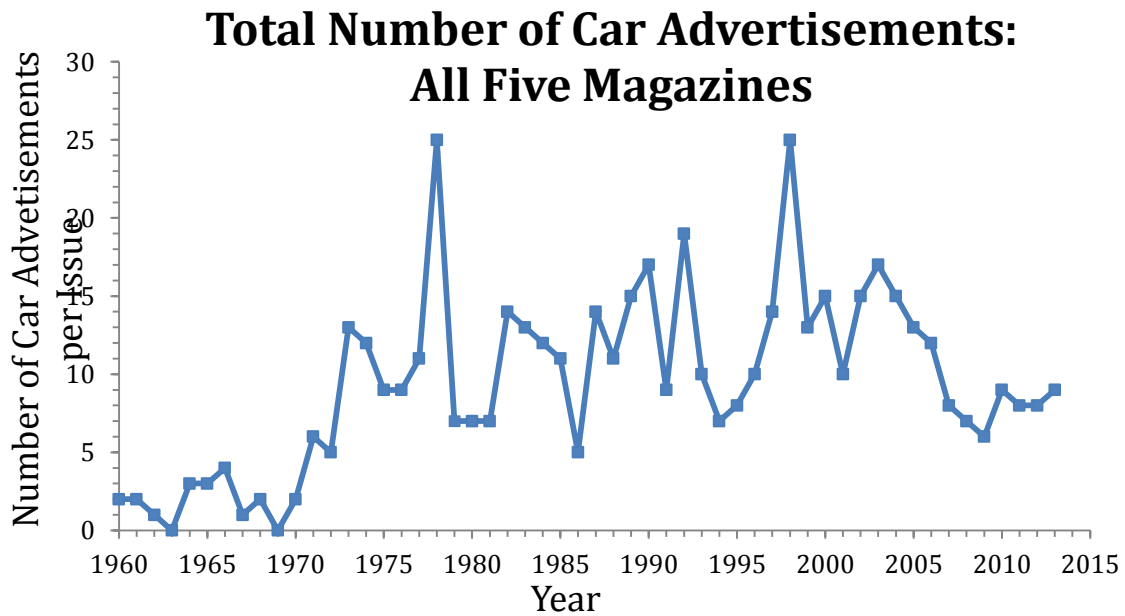


Figure 2: Total number of car advertisements for all five magazines. The greatest number of advertisements was 25 for both 1978 and 1998. Gaps in the data existed in the following years for each of the magazines: *Cosmo* (1984-2013), *The New Yorker* (1993-2013), *National Geographic* (1974, 1976, 1981, 1984, and 1986), *Esquire* (1968-1973), and *Ebony* (1960-1970 and 2011-2013).

Number of Car Advertisements per Magazine

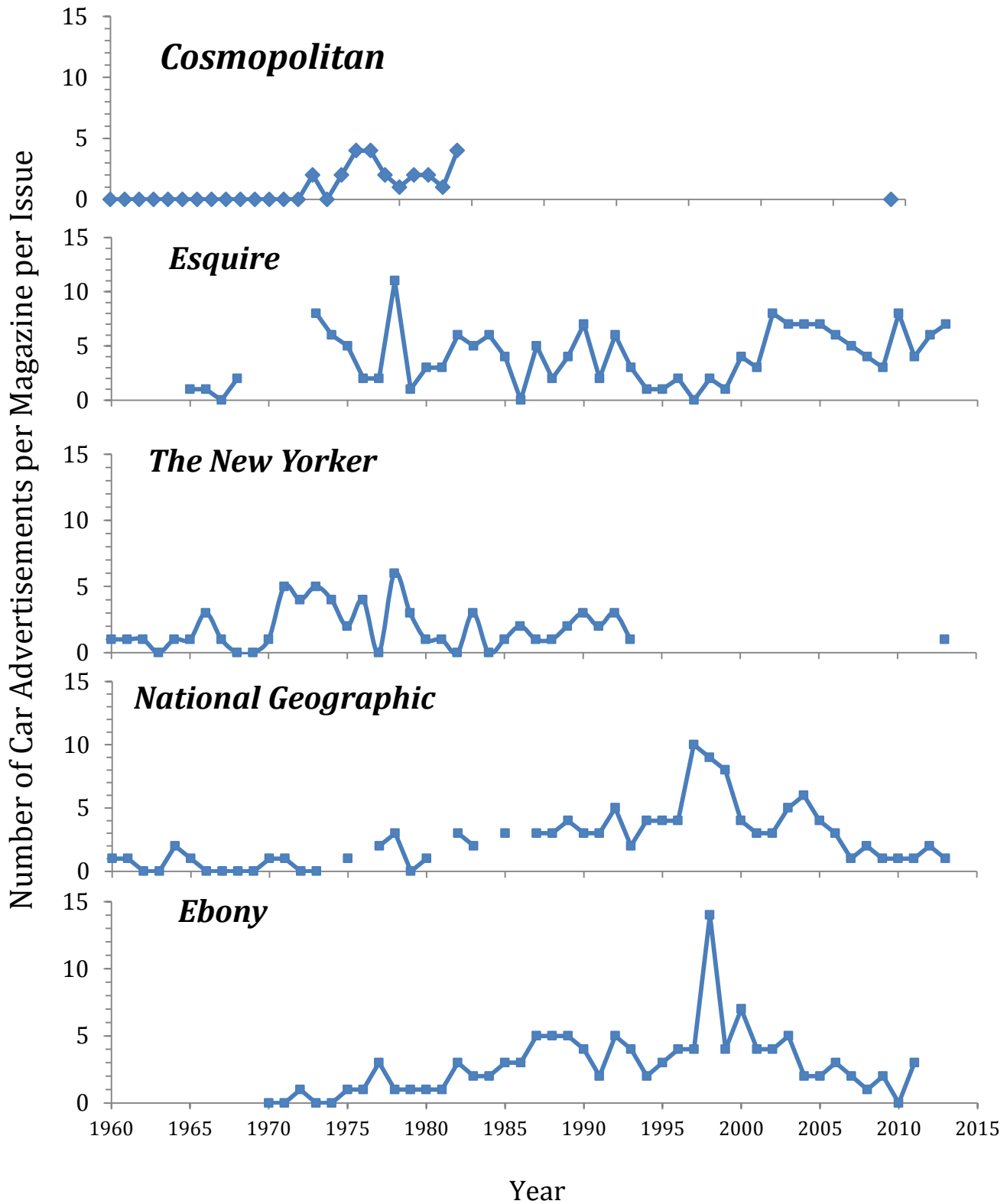


Figure 3: The number of car advertisements for each of the five magazines between 1960-2014. There were no car advertisements in *Cosmo* until the 70s. *Ebony* had the highest number of car advertisements (14) per magazine in 1998.

Proportion of Car Advertisements

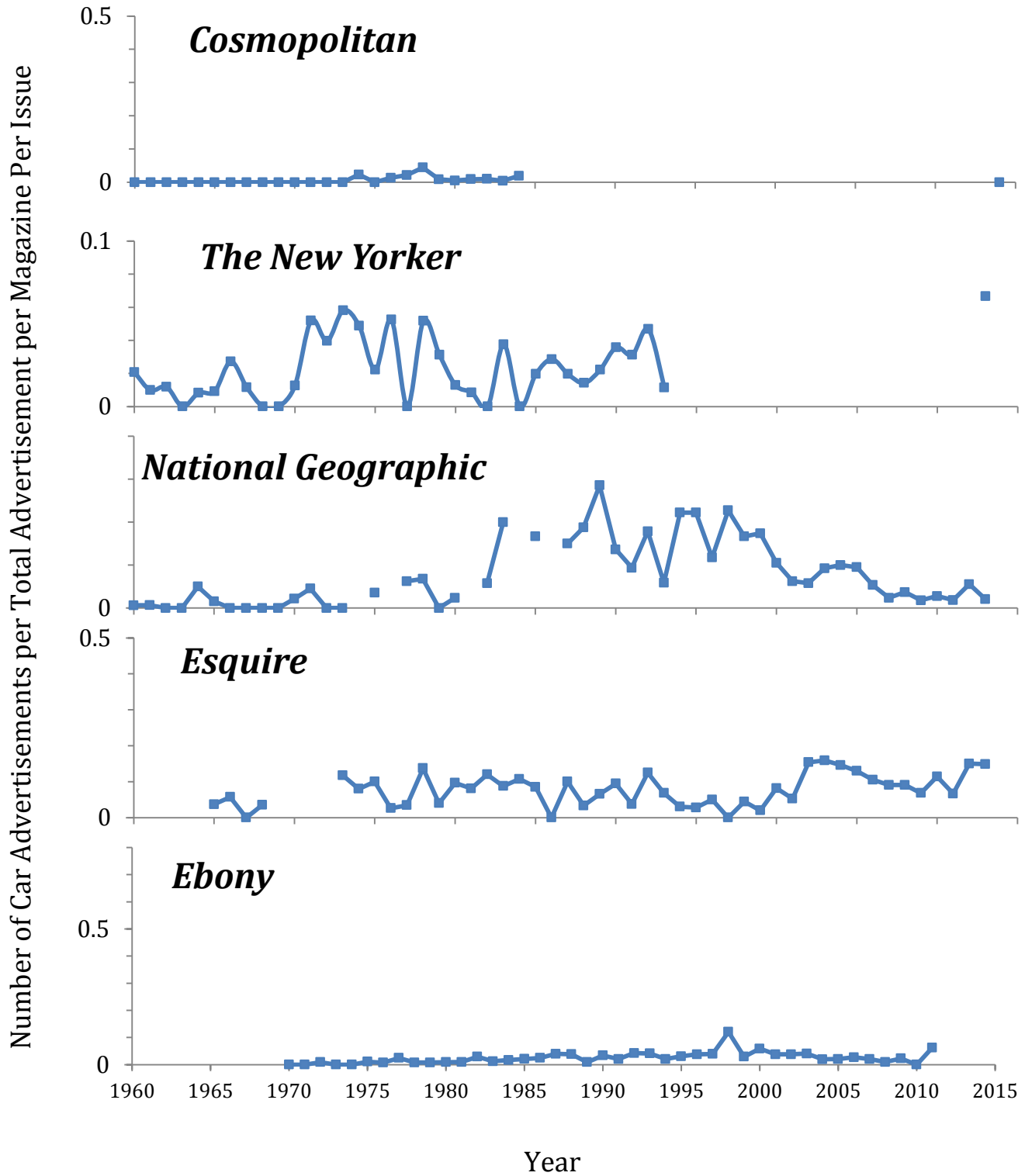


Figure 4: The number of car advertisements per number of pages per magazine. The values are relatively flat for all of the magazines with the exception of *National Geographic*. Note: the y axis for each of the graph is different.

Car Advertisements per Number of Pages per Magazine

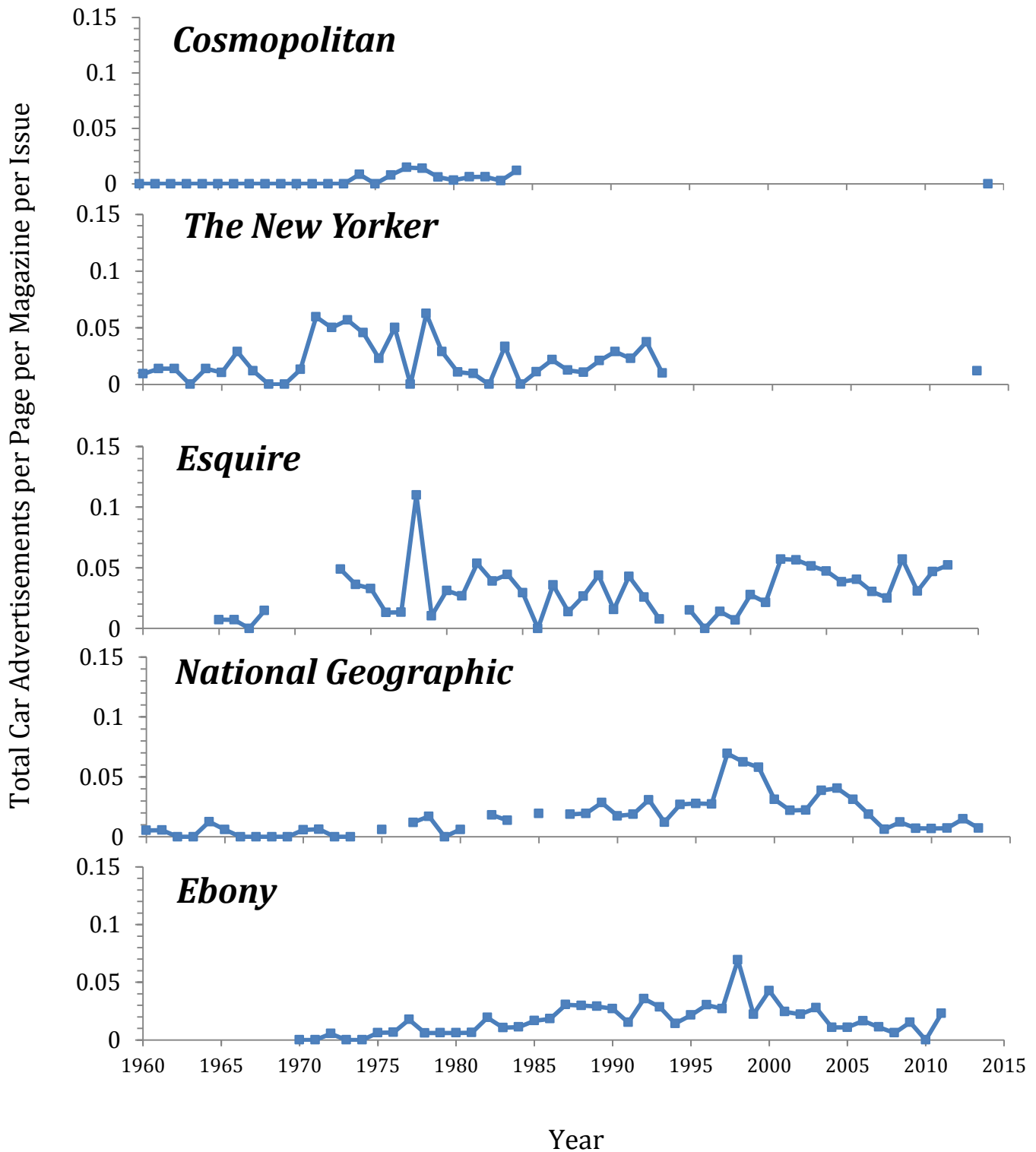


Figure 5: Number of car advertisements per number of pages per magazine for all five magazines. There was variation in the number of car advertisements due to the number of pages the magazine was publishing each year.

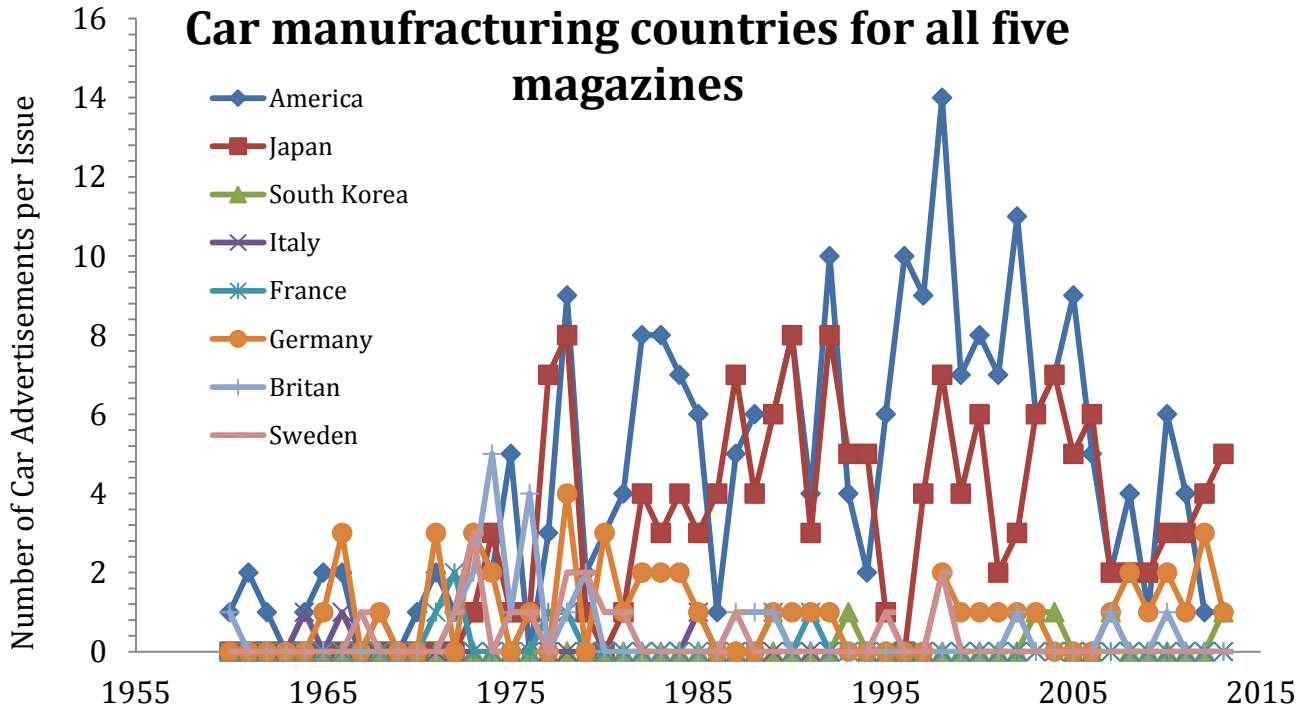


Figure 6: Car manufacturing countries for all five magazines. Car manufacturing countries include America, Japan, South Korea, Italy, France, Germany, Britain, and Sweden. However, not all of these countries were present in every magazine. America and Japan were the leading manufacturing countries between 1960-2013.

Car Manufacturing Countries

Total Car Advertisements per Page per Magazine per Year

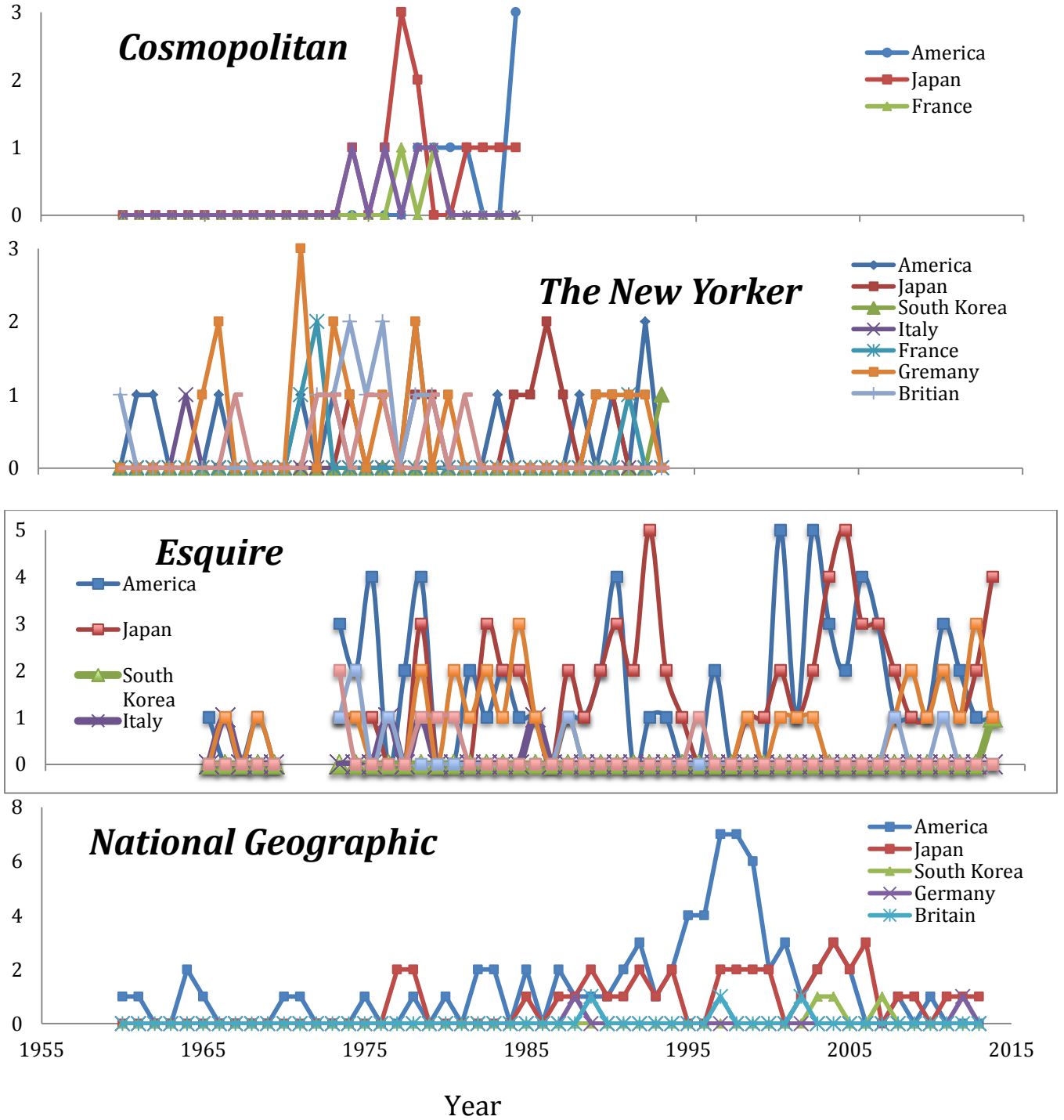


Figure 7: Car manufacturing countries for *Cosmopolitan*, *The New Yorker* and *National Geographic*. There was a large presence of German automobiles in *The New Yorker*. *Cosmo* and *National Geographic* were predominantly American and Japanese cars. The X axes are not to scale in order to better display the data for each magazine. Note: the y axis for the graphs are different.

Car Feature Focus

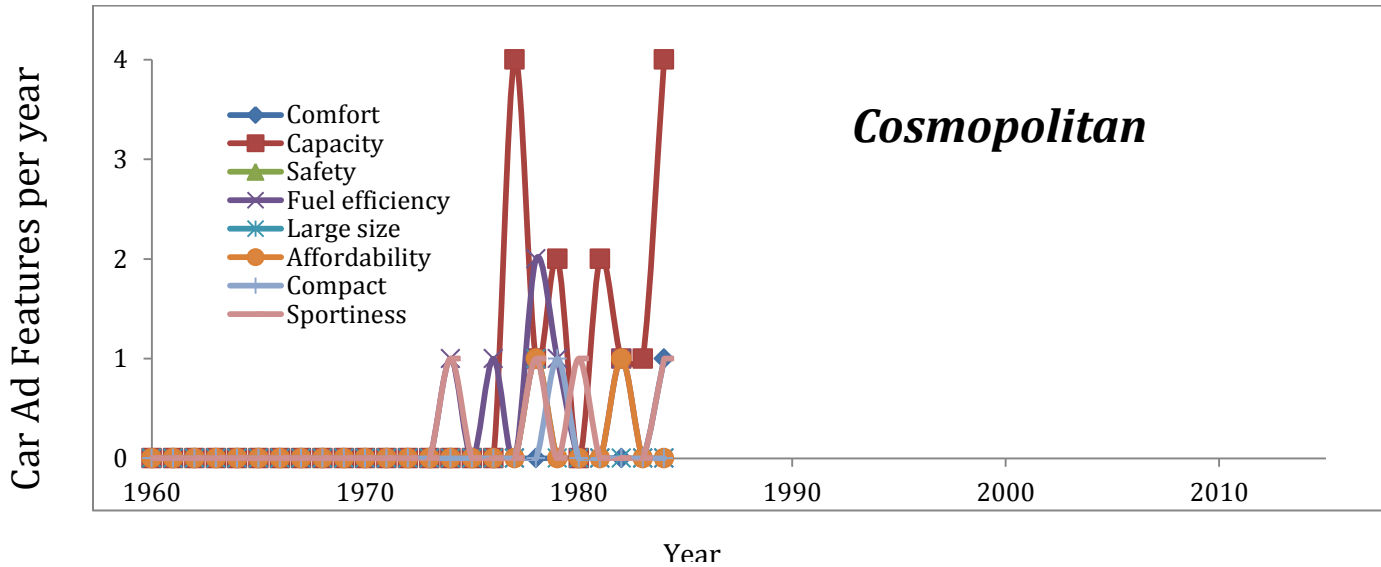


Figure 8: The car features per magazine per year for *Cosmo*. The nine various features included comfort (luxury, nice interior/ exterior, style of car), capability (smooth, quiet, precise, technology and engine power), safety, fuel efficiency (great mileage, sustainability, hybrid cars), large size, affordability, compact (little cars - less is more), ruggedness (outdoors/ off road), and sportiness. There was no ruggedness focus in any car advertisement so it is not shown in the graph.

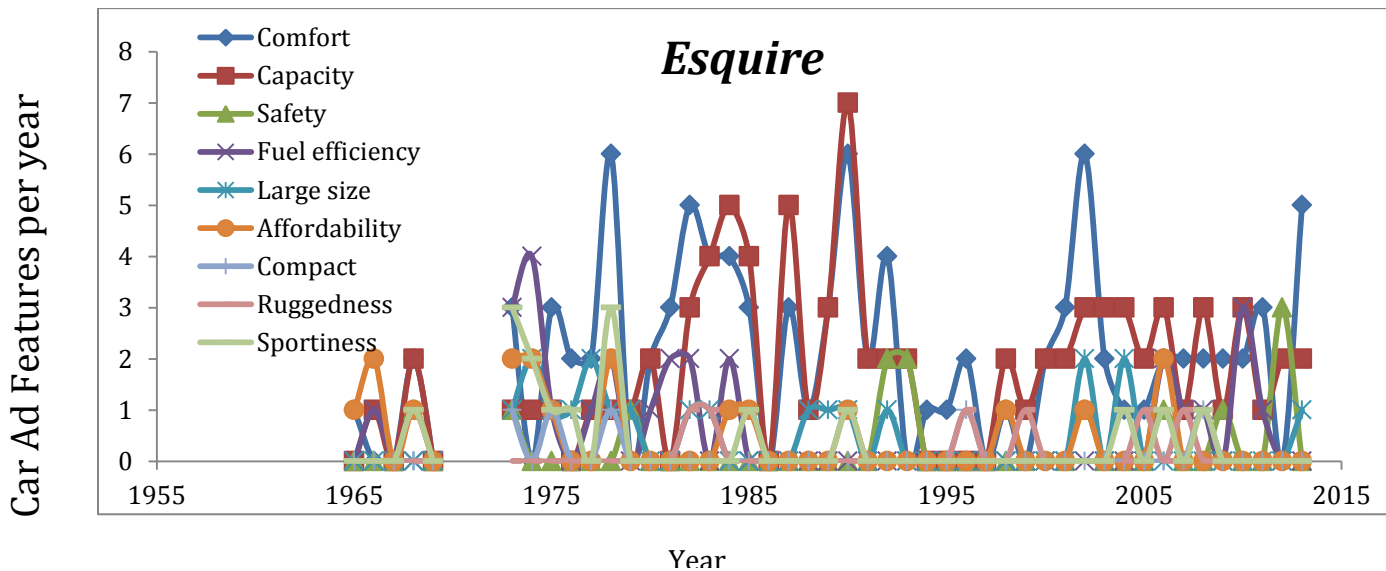


Figure 9: The car features per magazine per year for *Esquire*. The nine various features included comfort (luxury, nice interior/ exterior, style of car), capability (smooth, quiet, precise, technology and engine power), safety, fuel efficiency (great mileage, sustainability, hybrid cars), large size, affordability, compact (little cars - less is more), ruggedness (outdoors/ off road), and sportiness.