

# “Trusted for over 80 years”: Ted Bates and Trojan Advertising, 1985-2001

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*The Ted Bates advertising agency’s 17-year stewardship over the Trojan brand condom advertising account provides a unique case study into the challenges of maintaining market leadership in a mature product category when rapidly developing social issues change consumer perceptions and the overall status of the product. It also provides an object lesson into how an advertising strategy can successfully address multiple aims while also promoting sales and market growth.*

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## INTRODUCTION

When Carter-Wallace acquired the Trojan line of condoms from Young’s Rubber Corp. in 1985 and awarded the advertising account to its longtime partner, Ted Bates Advertising, the agency found itself confronted with a unique, complex and challenging situation. Trojan, one of the oldest and most widely recognized brand of condoms, had long occupied such a position of market dominance that the brand had become synonymous with the condom category itself. The slippage between brand identity and category leadership meant that Trojan carried the dubious distinction of being the condom that everyone used once (it was by far the most popular brand among first-time users), but many users then drifted away to other brands with lower prices and/or more contemporary marketing messages.<sup>1</sup> The major consequence of this phenomenon was that while Trojan maintained its position as market leader, it proved very difficult to grow in terms of market share, so it stagnated while newer brands chipped away at its market base.

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<sup>1</sup> This problem persisted. Ten years later, even, a status report complained that Trojan has a high proportion of uncommitted buyers, while its competitors have a high proportion of committed buyers, most of whom have already tried Trojans. “1995 Brand Image Study,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

In Bates’ initial presentation to Carter-Wallace,<sup>2</sup> it identified a bewildering array of challenges facing the Trojan brand, challenges which reflected the complex position that Trojan, and condoms generally, held within the deeply ingrained and contested ideas about health, sexuality, relationships and family planning within American cultural life. The challenges included convincing health professionals, from doctors to pharmacists, to include condoms in their discussions and recommendations for disease prevention and contraception; to reverse the historical reluctance of network broadcasters to accept condom advertising, while arming broadcasters with the information and confidence needed to confront and resist criticisms; to conduct better research to gauge public attitudes toward condoms, contraceptives, and disease prevention; and to rethink Trojan’s target audience, as a step towards containing customer flight.

Bates proposed an approach that unified all these complex issues under a single, elegant statement: “Trojan. For all the right reasons.” The agency’s trademark “Unique Selling Proposition” method, or USP, generated a statement that simultaneously worked as a slogan and as a strategic direction for subsequent marketing and advertising efforts, while it focused a broad range of social issues on a single brand image. For the whole period that Bates held the Trojan account, from 1985 until Carter-Wallace sold the brand to Church & Dwight in 2001, Trojan campaigns all articulated some form of that initial concept, negotiating sensitive and timely issues in ways that informed and entertained while adhering to Carter-Wallace’s commitment to health education. The paper that follows will explore some of these issues amid the changing landscape of North America in the 1980s and 1990s, and look at the ways that Bates addressed them in its advertising and promotional campaigns.

## METHODOLOGY

For this paper, research was conducted using the Carter-Wallace account files of the Bates Worldwide, Inc.

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<sup>2</sup> “Presentation to Carter-Wallace,” 1985, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

Records collection, housed at the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History in Duke University's Rare Books, Manuscripts and Special Collections Library. The account files included periodic account reviews, progress reports, third-party research, clippings and correspondence.

## SOCIAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Condoms, even today, bear some of the stigma that is the legacy of the 1873 Comstock Act, which transformed social taboos on talk about sex into legislation that linked contraception to pornography under the banner of obscenity. Comstock restricted interstate sales, advertising and the transmission of information of a broad range of sexually-oriented goods and literature, and led to individual states adopting analogous statutes at the state and local level.

Although the force of Comstock eroded over time—rulings in the case of Margaret Sanger's birth control clinic and a trademark infringement case involving Trojan helped free medical applications from the scope of the Act—the anti-obscenity laws had a great influence on both popular attitudes towards contraceptives as well as on institutional responses toward birth control and prophylactic health information. Contraceptive sales in the U.S. remained illegal until the Supreme Court struck down the ban in 1977.<sup>3</sup> The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), in its programming code, prohibited the broadcast of sexually-oriented matters, but over time enforcement eroded as advertising for feminine hygiene products and hemorrhoid treatments appeared. The NAB did not drop its ban on contraceptive advertising until 1982, in the face of an antitrust challenge.<sup>4</sup> Still, many individual networks maintained a ban on contraceptive advertising, and contraceptive advertising occurred only among local station markets.

## BATES AND TROJAN

At the time that Bates acquired the Trojan account in 1985, condoms as a category were under-marketed and stigmatized. What advertising there was appeared only in the backs of men's magazines such as *Playboy*, or in local alternative newspapers; there were no unified national campaigns and no broadcast advertising. All major broadcast networks had policies banning contraceptive advertising, but Bates was working quietly to reverse those policies. An October, 1985, memo from Bates to Carter-

<sup>3</sup> *Carey v. Population Services International*, 431 U.S. 678.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Population Options report, "The Status of Contraceptive Product Advertising in the U.S.," 1986, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

Wallace indicated that Bates' legal department was trying to get one of the networks to conduct a spot test in a select market,<sup>5</sup> but a year later negotiations still had not produced any concrete results. According to a 1986 internal status report, Bates planned to achieve national broadcast acceptance for condom advertising gradually, beginning with local markets. At first, ABC had been the most receptive, but it was widely believed that other networks would follow the lead of whichever network broke the ice. Network officials claimed, in principle at least, that contraceptive messages would be considered, and that condom advertising did not have to limit the message to disease prevention.<sup>6</sup>

In practice, however, networks were nervous about local reception and the reactions of other advertisers to the presence of contraceptive advertising. Reports of early reception of contraceptive advertising had been mixed across all media. While a 1986 Harris poll had found that 78% of Americans supported contraceptive advertising, compared with 47% in 1980, and a Center for Population Options poll of 16 network affiliate stations which ran advertisements for the Today Sponge and Semicid contraceptives found only 2 which received a threatening negative response,<sup>7</sup> *Time* magazine encountered strong resistance to the appearance of a Today Sponge print advertisement.<sup>8</sup> Efforts to test-market commercials in local markets also met with resistance. Initial storyboards were rejected in Los Angeles and Chicago after pressure from religious groups, and negotiations in New York suffered a series of setbacks. Several cable stations, including CNN, ESPN and Lifetime, accepted Trojan advertising in principle, but had yet to air a commercial.

Help came early the following year from the U.S. government, when Surgeon General Everett Koop addressed Congress in February, 1987. Koop, a controversial advocate of proactive health policy, publicly recommended condoms as a preventive measure in the fight against AIDS, the period's most prominent health issue. Koop's speech had an immediate impact. Under pressure from the Reagan Administration to re-align his message with the Administration's family values focus, Koop soon

<sup>5</sup> Mark Morris to David McLain, Oct. 7, 1985, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>6</sup> "Status Report on Trojan Television Advertising," Oct. 30, 1986, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Population Options report, "The Status of Contraceptive Product Advertising in the U.S.," 1986, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Morris to John Mack, Sept. 26, 1986, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

after delivered a modified message promoting abstinence and monogamy as the only sure means of disease prevention, but the earlier message could not be easily retracted. By the month's end, 94 stations, representing 55% of the U.S. market, had agreed to accept condom advertising with a disease prevention message. New commercials were designed that balanced the Surgeon General's two statements, abstinence and condom use.

Bates' internal documents described three phases of advertising strategy during the life of the Trojan account. The first phase, lasting roughly between 1987-1989, stressed improvements to product category sales through emphasis on a health message. The second phase, lasting from 1989-1990, sought to emphasize the Trojan brand by highlighting the brand's superiority within the larger product category. Finally, a third phase lasting from 1991-1995 took a hybrid position, with an effort to brand the category amid declining sales, using Trojan's market leadership to expand the entire category.

## PHASE I: SELLING THE CATEGORY

The environment newly created by Koop's endorsement of condom use forced some changes in Bates' advertising strategy. Up to that point, Trojan advertising had promoted the generic benefits of condom use, stressing birth control, unspecified disease prevention and humorous approaches aimed at overcoming the embarrassment of buying condoms. Koop's speech to Congress explicitly tied condoms to public health policy in the battle against AIDS. Condoms gained a new legitimacy, and print advertisements quickly began to feature quotes from the Surgeon General about the efficacy of condoms in disease prevention.

Bates' print campaigns quickly spread from men's (like *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*) and youth-oriented magazines (such as *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, and *National Lampoon*) to mainstream print, including *People*, *US*, *Parenting* and *Health* magazines. The copy focused on sexually transmitted diseases, not specifying a particular one,<sup>9</sup> and featured ominous messages about being "extra secure in love" while living in a "very dangerous world" in which "these days, some pretty terrible things are happening to some really nice people." The theme of vulnerability in a viral world resonated through copy text warning that a potential partner "had a life before he met you."

Bates also managed to get some of these messages into local television and radio spots in selected markets, such as Los Angeles. The challenge, though, lay in the fact that selling the value of condoms as a category in the fight against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) risked underselling the value of Trojans as a brand. Bates attempted to address the problem through a tag-line in

<sup>9</sup> One of the few advertisements of this period to explicitly mention AIDS was actually aimed at physicians, and appeared in the NARD Journal.

advertisements that "Trojan helps reduce the risk" but at the same time the agency sought to promote the brand *and* the category, hoping to increase sales of the brand by increasing demand across the whole product category. One report stated that the "overall objective of Trojan advertising is to elevate consumer perception of the category and establish Trojan as the most trusted brand."<sup>10</sup> Concern over AIDS, though, had shifted the focus of condom use from contraception to disease prevention, and any effective advertising strategy would have to address that concern. Given the emotional and politicized debate surrounding AIDS, Bates decided that advertising should address health concerns without specifically mentioning AIDS, even if that was on everyone's minds at the time. Sensationalism should be avoided, in part by adopting a general tone of respectful seriousness that transcended the worries of the moment. "The tonality should be factual and serious and project integrity and reflect respect for those with differing views," the report said.<sup>11</sup>

There are certain groups who want to eliminate contraception and anti-sexually transmitted disease advertising. These groups feel deeply, and we should respect their honest views by creating advertising that is not sensational but responsible. This means we should try to speak factually and honestly about the health problem, without creating characters for our TV, radio, and print advertising who talk openly about their sex lives.<sup>12</sup>

This concern grew out of concerns over sensationalism of some of Trojan's competitors' advertising. In 1986, Lifestyles condoms ran a print advertisement which featured a woman who says "I enjoy sex, but I'm not ready to die for it."

The 1987 campaign saw Trojan sales rise, propelled in part by Koop's endorsement of condoms in the fight against AIDS and particularly in print media's willingness to accept condom advertising as a public service tie-in. Where Bates' first color advertisement in 1986 ran in 54 publications, by the end of 1987 Trojan advertisements ran in over 100 publications and several local radio markets. Sales jumped 20%, from roughly 100 million units to over 120 million, and Carter-Wallace stock jumped in price.<sup>13</sup>

The sales trend continued into 1988, but Bates strategists began noticing a slowdown in market growth. Marketing strategy began to shift away from a focus on the

<sup>10</sup> Position statement on Trojan advertising, Feb. 9, 1987, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> "A Safe-Sex Product in Need of a Marketing Plan," *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1992.

product category and more toward an emphasis on the qualities of the Trojan brand line. New advertising planning sought to capture market share from competitors, which in turn meant targeting current users rather than first-time buyers. Research undertook to address problems identified during focus group and survey projects, namely concerns over sensitivity, fit, breakage and the interruption to sexual activity caused by the act of putting the condom on.<sup>14</sup> This pointed the way to product line expansion, as larger sized condoms, extra-strength models, and condoms of newer materials for better sensitivity were proposed, tested and eventually launched in the market.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Bates worked to keep health concerns fore grounded. Several studies had noted an increasing sense of denial among youth about the real threat of STDs. A *Playboy* study showed a decline in risk awareness of AIDS by college-age men, and articles appeared claiming that the heterosexual risk of contracting HIV was exaggerated.<sup>16</sup> To promote health awareness and education about STDs, Bates and Carter-Wallace decided to focus on print campaigns, where the textual space allowed for detailed messages about safe sex, product demonstrations, and promotional opportunities lacking in broadcast media, where restrictions on running time and message content severely limited topical range and depth (for instance, discussions about contraceptive uses, spermicide, or any mention of sensitivity or pleasure were universally prohibited by network policies).

## PHASE II: SELLING THE BRAND

By 1989, AIDS had receded from its status as the number one news story, as heterosexual outbreaks proved to be lower than anticipated. AIDS remained for the time being a disease associated with gay lifestyles and drug use. Condom category sales peaked at around 140 million units, and Bates concentrated on gaining brand share within a flat market. Trojan advertising copy reversed its emphasis; now, the chief message was sensitivity, built upon the slogan “You’re more in touch with Trojan” while the disease-prevention message fell to a secondary status.

To support the sensitivity message, Trojan experimented with several new condom designs. The “baggy” or oval shaped condom, provisionally named the “Trojan Comfort,” included an enlarged section near the tip that was designed to simulate unprotected sex, and consumer test users reported that it felt more sensitive and

<sup>14</sup> “Strategic Evaluation,” 1988, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>15</sup> Larger-sized Trojan Magnum, and Trojan Extra Strength condoms appeared in 1989. Late in 1988, a condom with extra lubrication, a spermicide, and a pink package was marketed as Trojan for Women.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

comfortable than Trojan’s extra-strength condom (used as a control in testing). In addition, Trojan began work on an extra-thin condom, with models based on both latex compound and polyurethane. New products were not the only avenues Trojan found to enhance the perceived sensitivity of its products. Research indicated that consumer perceptions of sensitivity was influenced not only by the physical structure of condoms but also by their appearance, product naming and packaging, so Trojan investigated improvements to their existing product line. In particular, test-group studies found that consumers associated transparent or clear condoms with thinness and better sensitivity, whether or not real physical differences existed, so Trojan began looking for ways to switch its product line to clear condoms, which meant in turn a search for new lubricating materials.<sup>17</sup>

1990 marked the introduction of Trojan Man, a cartoon character who would appear in a variety of romantic or potentially romantic situations and hand out a condom. Spots and print commercials included the tag line: “Be a Trojan Man.” Radio spots initially appeared in selected markets in the spring of 1990, with print campaigns appearing later in the year. The campaign, popular among college-age men, did meet with some controversy, and several publishers and radio outlets rejected the advertisements for religious, moral, and community standards reasons. *Sports Illustrated*, for instance, rejected the print version of a Trojan-Enz Large advertisement that featured Trojan Man, in part on the grounds that the magazine had a wide underage readership, and the advertisement could be construed to promote youth promiscuity.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Trojan Man proved to be a popular merchandising vehicle, and a viable spokesperson among college and young adult markets, and is still in use today in print, broadcast and internet campaigns.

## PHASE III: BRANDING THE CATEGORY

AIDS briefly regained media attention in 1991 when basketball star Magic Johnson announced he had tested positive for HIV. This was important for a number of reasons. First, here was sports celebrity who openly acknowledged his disease, thus putting a public face on the epidemic.<sup>19</sup> Also, Johnson helped confront an atmosphere

<sup>17</sup> Historically, Trojan condoms had been tinted a pale yellow to conceal the harmless discoloration over time of the silicon-based lubricant used. Brand Review, 1991, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>18</sup> *Advertising Age*, Jan. 7, 1991, Clipping file, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>19</sup> Tennis star Arthur Ashe had been diagnosed with HIV, the result of transfusions of contaminated blood, as early as 1988, but kept his disease private until 1992, a year

of denial especially among American youth: as a heterosexual male, Johnson showed that risky behavior, not homosexuality or intravenous drug use, could bring one in contact with the disease. AIDS once again became, for the moment at least, a disease that threatened everyone.

Less than a week after Johnson made his public statement, the Fox network announced that it would begin accepting condom ads, provided that they stress disease prevention and not contraception. Fox had been in negotiation with both Bates and Schmid Laboratories, which had a commercial ready for its Ramses condoms. Fox officials rejected the Ramses commercial after a screening showed the word “spermicide” clearly visible in a close-up of the condom box. That rejection opened the way for Trojan, and on November 17, 1991, at 9:43 p.m., during an airing of the sitcom *Herman’s Head*, Trojan ran the first branded condom advertisement on television.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, condom commercials would run on several cable networks, including MTV, VH-1 and Lifetime, but broadcast networks were slow to respond, citing concerns over reactions from advertisers and viewers.

The celebrity status of Magic Johnson helped pull other celebrity figures into the public discussion of AIDS. In 1992 Bates launched Trojan’s “In Control” campaign featuring a variety of sports figures, but the campaign failed to increase sales. It proved difficult to maintain a heightened public concern over STDs and especially AIDS, as low numbers of reported heterosexual cases reduced the perceived risk for mainstream audiences.

Declining sales forced Bates to rethink its advertising strategy. A 1993 internal analysis found a direct correlation between advertising dollars and unit sales, but market share proved more difficult to expand. The report concluded that brand sales would increase along with increases in category sales, and thus it was important to return to the circa 1987 strategy of promoting category sales.<sup>21</sup> The problem was, the target market itself was shrinking, a consequence of an aging U.S. population. With the population in decline, the only means of growing the category was to increase usage. There were, however, several means of addressing this issue. Public government support for condoms had briefly resumed, with Surgeon General nominee Jocelyn Elders’

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after Johnson’s announcement and a year before Ashe’s death. Partly due to the changed climate in the wake of Johnson’s public statements, Ashe worked as an AIDS activist the last two years of his life.

<sup>20</sup> “Trojan Brand History,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University. Actually, a 30-second spot for Trojan had run once on a local station in Canton, Ohio, in July 1975, but community reaction was sharp and the commercial was dropped.

<sup>21</sup> “Trojan Advertising Effectiveness, 1990-1992,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

endorsement of condom use and her call for networks to reverse their ban on condom advertising<sup>22</sup> amid concerns that safe sex practices were in decline at the same time as STDs (other than AIDS) were on the rise. Surveys had indicated that 56% of males 15-24 did not buy condoms,<sup>23</sup> while a Dallas County Health Department study found that 64% of self-identified straight men (as opposed to only 16% of gay or bisexual men) never used condoms,<sup>24</sup> indicating a large pool of untapped potential consumers and targets for public health education messages. In addition, research had shown that in the majority of relationships it was the women who chose the method of contraceptive used,<sup>25</sup> thus women could be targeted both as purchasers of condoms and as influencers of buying decisions.

There were other concerns as well. The market environment was changing as mass merchandisers (such as K-Mart) and convenience stores replaced drug stores as the sites where most sales occurred. Trojan was losing market share to lower-cost “price brands” such as Lifestyles, which explicitly went after the teen market in its television advertisements, and gay consumers through placement of print ads in media that catered to gay communities.

These concerns and considerations led to the development of Trojan’s “Get Real” campaign as a means of regaining market dominance. “Get Real” challenged a series of popular excuses for not using condoms with moral messages that included: “With a condom, you’ll both relax. And that feels good, too”; “If you’re not ready to buy, carry or use a condom, you’re not ready for sex”; and “The heat of the moment can burn you for a lifetime.” Print advertisements featured the “Get Real” tagline as well as the older message, “Helps reduce the risk.” Strategies aimed at women included messages that it was “cool” to insist that partners use Trojan condoms every time; and that Trojan was smart protection against STDs and conception. The campaign succeeded in promoting condom category sales while simultaneously positioning Trojan as the better, most trusted brand, in part by references to its legacy as market leader over seven decades.

The “Get Real” campaign appeared in print and radio beginning in 1993; television spots began running the following year, on cable networks like MTV, E! and CNBC,

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<sup>22</sup> Clipping file, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>23</sup> 1993 work session notes, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>24</sup> *JAMA*, Feb. 10, 1993, Clipping file, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>25</sup> 1993 work session notes, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University. Attributed to a survey conducted by *Self* magazine.

along with local cable stations in markets such as Atlanta and Houston. Analyzing the results of this campaign, Bates found that the radio campaign was effective among all age groups surveyed, and especially among women, who preferred the seriousness of the message over the lighter narrative of the “Trojan Man” campaign. The television spots were surveyed as less effective.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the success of the “Get Real” campaign, Trojan continued to lose market share as competitors increased their advertising spending.<sup>27</sup> In addition, new products within the category, such as polyurethane brands, lower priced brands, and new products to which Carter-Wallace and Bates were slow to respond.<sup>28</sup> Condoms had largely moved within retail outlets from behind the counter to the sales racks, easing the stigma of having to ask for a particular brand or type of condom, and more convenience stores carried condoms.

The new strategy for 1995 sought to address market share losses by reinforcing brand loyalty. Bates brand image studies indicated that condoms enjoyed high brand loyalty and low levels of brand switching. Nevertheless, while Trojans were frequently cited as the first condom that consumers purchased, many moved on to other brands, in part because of Trojan’s perceived image as an “old fashioned” brand while other brands projected a more youthful image.<sup>29</sup>

Other research complicated the overall advertising landscape,<sup>30</sup> but at the same time pointed to opportunities

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<sup>26</sup> “1994 Advertising Plan,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Carter-Wallace’s 1994 advertising budget of \$2.7 million represented 70% of category advertising spending, but its 1995 budget of \$2.8 million represented only about 40% of category spending. To consider just one competitor, Durex’s spending to advertise its Sheik brand of condoms jumped from \$402,000 in 1994 to \$2.6 million the following year. “Carter Brands” report, 1996, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>28</sup> Carter Wallace did introduce a price brand, Class Act, in 1994; the “microshear” polyurethane Trojan Supra condom appeared in 1996.

<sup>29</sup> “1995 Condom Brand Image Study,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University. Alternatively, the “old-fashioned” stigma attached to Trojans was seen as a mark of an inexperienced sexual partner, while brands with a hipper image bore the mark of a certain sophistication and *savior faire*.

<sup>30</sup> Not least of which was a May, 1995 *Consumer Reports* article which reported that several types of Trojan condom failed its breakage/leak testing. One of the failed models, Trojan-Enz, caused much concern because at the

for promotional activity. The 1994 University of Chicago study “Sex in America,” the largest comprehensive survey of sexuality in the United States since the Kinsey reports of the 1950s, reported that 83% of respondents were monogamous, in committed relationships with people whose sexual histories were not entirely known by their partners. Bates’ Work Session report for 1995 recommended that advertising focus on committed relationships in their advertising and packaging imagery, while promoting condom use as an act of caring and trust and fostering communication between partners, a task complicated by the results of a 1994 University of San Francisco study, which found widespread embarrassment over condom purchases and prevalent attitudes that associated insistence on condom use with a lack of trust in a partner.<sup>31</sup>

Since research indicated that reasons for using condoms split between birth control and disease prevention, especially among unmarried and younger consumers, Bates had two threads within which to promote condom use.<sup>32</sup> Condoms could be favorably compared to other forms of birth control, and discussions of STDs could be limited to those prevalent (such as chlamydia, genital warts, herpes) among heterosexual populations. Since it is easier for a man to transmit an STD to a woman than the reverse, marketing efforts should seek ways to maintain a dual audience approach (men as purchasers, women as influencers) and to educate women, who were most affected by STDs other than AIDS, on ways to initiate discussions on condom use.

The creative strategy that emerged from the work session focused on reinforcing Trojan as America’s number one brand, the most trusted and reliable. The dual audience approach would target males and females ages 14-34, males as new and current users of condoms, and females as new and current users of contraceptives. The tone of advertising should resonate with that age group, and sound both contemporary and trustworthy. In addition, Bates should explore avenues for what it called “guerrilla” marketing tactics; these included promotion in women’s publications,

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time of the article Carter-Wallace was donating that type to the New York City public school system as part of a safe-sex program. However, Bates reported to Carter-Wallace that the article should only minimally impact brand performance, as the magazine’s readership was older than Trojan’s target audience, and research indicated that while the magazine bore significant influence on big-ticket purchases like cars and appliances, its influence on personal consumer goods was negligible. Furthermore, *Consumer Reports’* own editorial policy prohibited Trojan’s competitors from exploiting the results of the magazine’s tests in their own advertisements.

<sup>31</sup> “1995 Work Session,” Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

<sup>32</sup> “1995 Condom Brand Image Study.”

product samples available at obstetric and gynecology clinics, celebrity endorsements, event sponsorships, and product placement on television programming and movies.<sup>33</sup>

To these ends, Bates' "Trojan Man" was ideally suited as a vehicle for reaching younger audiences. Over the next few years, print advertisements and broadcast spots featured Trojan Man in a variety of situations, and other characters would assert "I'm a Trojan girl" or "a Trojan man." In addition, Trojan launched a website that combined educational features with entertainments such as a rotating "fun facts" series that combined factual trivia with humorous commentary.<sup>34</sup>

## CONTINUING CHALLENGES

Over the next several years, Bates struggled to maintain Trojan's position as market leader. New products were added to the line. Commercials aired on network television: Trojan Man, which had aired on the radio in 1996, appeared during late-night programming on NBC in 1998. Spots typically ran during late programming aimed at young adults, such as Fox's MAD TV, and NBC's Saturday Night Live. There was still considerable resistance among broadcasters to airing condom advertising. As late as 2001, *Adweek* reported that, despite surveys showing widespread acceptance of condom advertising among American viewers, some networks like Fox, CBS, and NBC would only run condom advertising at night, after child-friendly prime time, and then only with a disease-prevention message, while other networks including ABC, UPN and WB would not run any condom-related advertising.<sup>35</sup>

In 2001, Carter-Wallace sold off its consumer products lines, including Trojan, to Church & Dwight, ending Bates' 16-year stewardship of the Trojan brand. Interestingly, Trojan's new agency, the Kaplan Thayer Group, retained many of the themes and campaigns, including the website and the Trojan Man spokes-character, that Bates had created, testimony to the ingenuity and effectiveness of the

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<sup>33</sup> "1995 Work Session." A frequently cited successful condom placement scene occurred in the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*, where Julia Roberts' character offers Richard Gere's character a condom before they have sex. In addition, discussions with network officials had indicated to Bates that discussions of sensitive topics within the context of televised programming was tolerable in ways that the advertising of sensitive products during the same programs were not.

<sup>34</sup> For example: "The sole of the foot is about as sensitive as the human penis (But they sure do different things when you tickle them)."

<sup>35</sup> *Adweek*, June 25, 2001. Clipping file, Bates Worldwide, Inc. Records, Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collection Library, Duke University.

Bates campaigns. Trojan continues to use the tag-line "Trusted for over (X) years" in its advertising and on its website.

Bates navigated the Trojan line through one of the most trying and politically charged public health crises of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and through a sea-change of media and marketing technology. Under Bates' supervision and in great measure through its efforts, Trojan and other condoms moved from the back pages of men's magazines to mainstream print and broadcast arenas, and from the back shelves of drugstores to take their place on retail racks as legitimized consumer goods.