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ABSTRACT

During World War II, the French dominance of the American fashion and perfume industry subsided, allowing American brands to gain significant market share. Concurrent with changes in the roles and images of women during these years and triggered by time-specific circumstances, new marketing strategies proliferated that concentrated on American products.

INTRODUCTION

World War II overshadowed most of American life and society in the years from 1940 to 1946, especially after the attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. One of the most dramatic changes in American society during the War was in the roles and images of women and their portrayal in advertisements for consumer goods such as clothing and perfume. These two industries in particular faced many challenges but it was during this period that the French dominance of fashion was broken. Despite the limitations and restrictions imposed on these markets by the War, the years from 1940 to 1946 proved to be of vital significance to the future development of the fashion and perfume industries in the United States.

MOBILIZING FOR WAR

On January 16, 1942, President Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB) to oversee economic mobilization. Donald Nelson of Sears, Roebuck and Company headed the WPB, which by the spring of 1942 issued orders limiting nonessential production and forbidding the use of scarce materials (Polenberg 1972).

Mobilization for the war effort effectively ended the Depression. America enjoyed immense prosperity during the war. The gross national product grew from about \$90 billion in 1939 to almost \$200 billion by 1945, stimulated by increased federal war spending. The median family income grew from \$1,463 in 1940 to over \$3,000 in 1945. Even after increased taxes and the purchase of war bonds, Americans had money to spend on whatever goods were still available (Reynolds 1990).

In November of 1941, the War Advertising Council was created to enlist the support of advertising agencies, companies, and the government in a drive to increase the public awareness of issues related to the war. Advertising agencies, eager to replace accounts lost from consumer goods manufacturers who converted to wartime production, convinced the government that their services would boost public morale and support for the war. Companies were interested in keeping their name in the public's mind, even though they had few goods to sell. Advertising agencies and companies participated extensively in government campaigns from recruitment of women into war production to war bond campaigns. The persuasive techniques, which had been used for selling consumer products, were used to promote and support government goals. The Treasury Department allowed war contractors to deduct publicity expenses from their taxable income, so the propaganda ads were partially underwritten by the government (Honey 1984).

THE CHANGING ROLES AND IMAGES OF WOMEN

During the years of the War, the government, the media, and society at large encouraged women for

the first time to take jobs outside the home, and even told women it was their patriotic duty to do so. The Magazine Bureau, established in June 1942 to create efficient lines of communication between the government and magazines, was headed by Dorothy Ducas, a journalist and friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. The Bureau undertook a campaign to encourage magazines to help the government in their womanpower campaign. The campaign encouraged women to enter the workforce as quickly as possible to replace men going into the armed services and to convince the public to put aside the traditional prejudices against women working. The Magazine Bureau provided publishers with ample photographs of women in nontraditional working roles and detailed reports on working women to encourage them to print articles with images of women appropriate to the new wartime demands. Magazines were asked to highlight occupations to which women should be drawn to meet wartime needs. They included nursing, clerical work, shipping, aircraft manufacture and heavy transport. They linked these jobs with adventure, romance, and glamour to encourage women to seek employment and be willing to work long hours. Women were encouraged to take jobs to help the country win the war, not to fulfill their own dreams or ambitions, and not to bring about any general equality in employment (Daniel 1987; Ryan 1983; Ware 1982).

The image of the patriotic housewife who puts on overalls and goes to work in a defense plant, created by Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* cover of "Rosie the Riveter," came to symbolize women's contribution to the war effort. Magazines glamorized the working girl and always depicted her as being white, middle class, young, pretty, well groomed, and smiling. Women's magazines such as *Glamour* depicted "Rosie The Riveter" as a natural heroine in both subtle and obvious ways. *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* began to feature war themes on their covers and in their editorial content. *Harper's Bazaar* pictured a young woman in overalls with the headline "The Home Front." Another issue featured a woman in the uniform of a nurse cadet, with the headline "Calling More Women." In September of 1943 *Vogue* featured a woman in business attire for the first time in its history. The cover had a woman in a severe brown Norell suit with the headline "Take a Job! Release a Man to Fight!" Inside the magazine the copy read, "Two words are all that you need to say but seventeen million women must say them... 'Use me' in any job that releases a man to fight."

Women in many of the magazine advertisements wore military uniforms or defense overalls. The WAC's (Women's Army Corps) advertised "New world, new woman doing a real job - in a man's army." An ad for Elizabeth Arden in 1944 featured a pretty young woman in military uniform wearing "Montezuma Red" lipstick and nail polish with the copy, "inspired by the brave, true red of the hat, cord, scarf, and chevrons of the women of the marines." Part of the copy read "Free a Marine to fight! Share the great traditions of the Marines. Join the U. S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve." Bourjois sponsored an ad in 1944 with the slogan "The more women at war - the sooner we'll win" (Honey 1984).

Women went to work in the defense industry, joined the military, or volunteered their time to organizations like the Red Cross. Between 1940 and 1945 women in the labor force grew by 50 percent, with the number of women working jumping from 11,970,000 in 1940 to 18,610,000 in 1945. By 1945 women formed 36 percent of the labor force. Many of these women were married, with one in every four wives employed by the end of the war (Hartman 1982).

One of the additional consequences of the war was that thousands of women who were already at work enjoyed an opportunity for occupational mobility. Many women traded low paying jobs as clerks and domestics for higher paying defense jobs. The general labor shortage opened up opportunities for women in traditional men's fields such as scientists, pilots, musicians, and college professors.

THE FASHION INDUSTRY DURING THE WAR YEARS

During the war, the U. S., cut off from all fashions and influences from France, built its own fashion industry in New York. American designers, for the first time, began to receive credibility and coverage from the fashion press. The two most influential fashion magazines, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, along with other

periodicals which had a fashion column, increased their coverage of New York fashion and its leaders. *Vogue* reflected the anxiety of the American fashion world by saying:

"This is the issue of *Vogue* that, in other years, was called 'Paris Openings.' But this year the needles of Paris have been suspended, temporarily we hope, by the fortunes of war. And for the first time in memory, an autumn mode is born without the direct inspiration of Paris. For the first time, the fashion center of the world is here - in America" (*Vogue*, September 1940, 41).

This could have also been said of the perfume business (*Vogue*, September 1940, 41).

Designers like Claire M. Cardell created simple, relatively inexpensive, unpretentious clothes which suited the current lifestyle of American women (Walton 1945). American designers of the war years did not project a glamorous, exciting cache and image, which could be extended to a successful perfume launch. Their image, epitomized by the "American Look," was popular and practical but not romantic and chic. Part of the responsibility for this lies at the feet of the high fashion magazines - *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* - which quickly switched their primary focus of fashion back to the French designers after 1944. The American fashion industry demonstrated competence, skill, and creativity during the war years. It made stylish, yet practical clothes, rather than couture clothes. Ready-to-wear clothes became a modern and democratic alternative for American women (Milbank 1989).

Being cut off from French fashion news and influences, the American fashion industry received an enormous boost from the war. The fashion press gave more coverage to American designers such as Norman Norell, Claire N. Cardell, Charles James and Mainboucher. Mainboucher became famous in Paris as a designer for the Duchess of Windsor and as an editor of French *Vogue*. He fled France just before it fell to the Germans. During the war, he made substantial contributions to American fashion including designing uniforms for the WAVES (Women Appointed for Volunteer Emergency Services in the Navy) and working with the WPB to create the L-85 order (Baker 1991).

The Impact of L-85

In 1942, the WPB announced L-85, a comprehensive order for the clothing industry. It gave specific limits to the amount of fabric to be used in clothing, skirt lengths, buttons, pleats, and trimming used. Its general rule of "no fabric on fabric" eliminated cuffs, patch pockets and double yokes. Heel heights could not exceed 1.5" and shoes were allowed in only six colors. American designers proved themselves to be very adaptable to the new restrictions.

Wool used in military uniforms and silk used in parachutes were the most restricted fabrics. Nylon, first used in stockings in 1939, provided a substitute for silk, but soon it too became restricted. Shortages of nylon for stockings led the cosmetic industry to develop leg make-up or "stockings in a bottle." One of the most famous brands was Schiaparelli's "Shocking Stocking," a take off of her famous perfume.

The restrictions had two major impacts. They favored American designers and helped establish the "American Look" inspired by the restrictions. The "American Look" featured sports clothes and separates, which were designed to be both practical and creative for women to wear in their active lives. Secondly, the restrictions indirectly encouraged the sales of perfumes and cosmetics because less of a woman's income could be spent on clothing, shoes, bags, and nylons. The American fashion industry adapted extremely well to wartime restrictions and established Seventh Avenue in New York as the fashion capital of the United States (Milbank 1989).

The State of French Couture

The occupation of Paris by the Germans from 1940-1944 proved to be the most difficult period in

French couture's 20th century history. Luxury products of fashion and perfumes had been important exports for France before the war. War presented the fashion industry many problems from fabric restrictions to losing its wealthy American market. One of its worst threats came from the Nazis who wanted to move the couture industry from Paris to Berlin and Vienna. The Germans recognized the export potential and prestige of fashion and perfumes, and wanted to capture this lucrative business for their own profit. Lucien Lelong, famous for his fashions and perfumes, headed La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture from 1937-1945. This organization was founded in 1868, during the early years of haute couture, to prevent cutthroat competition among the major couture houses. Under Lelong's dedicated direction, the Chambre Syndicale proved essential in keeping the fashion industry alive in Paris during the Occupation. Lelong succeeded in persuading the Germans that French couture could not survive outside Paris, which housed not only the designers but also the fabric suppliers as well as the workers with the technical expertise to make couture clothing (Baker 1991).

Several couture houses closed during the war, including some of the most prominent names in perfume. Schiaparelli and Mainboucher fled to New York for the duration of the war. Coco Chanel closed her house in 1939 and spent the war years at her suite at the Ritz Carlton in Paris. Chanel's perfume business, now being run by the Wertheimer family who had fled France in 1940, continued to sell products throughout the war from their independent subsidiary in the United States. Unknown to Chanel, the Wertheimers created a new corporation in America called Chanel, Inc. and opened a factory in Hoboken, New Jersey to manufacture the Chanel products. As a result, Chanel perfume continued to be sold and advertised throughout the war (Madsen 1990).

When Paris was liberated on August 26, 1944 the French fashion industry had to reestablish itself as the world's fashion center. To reassert their fashion eminence, couturiers with La Chambre de Syndicale created the Theater de la Mode, a collection of 228 wire dolls dressed by leading couturiers and shown in settings created by celebrated French artists. The show traveled to various European and American cities and helped to democratize fashion by making it available to thousands of women who had never before been exposed to French couture except in magazines. It arrived in New York on May 1, 1946 at the Whitelaw Reid House, which was owned by the perfume company Coty (Train 1991).

America proved only too willing to allow France to regain her place as the premier fashion and luxury goods leader of the world. Almost immediately after the liberation of Paris, both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* dispatched correspondents to Paris to report on the fashion scene. In the Fall of 1944 both magazines devoted special issues to the rediscovery of French fashion. Without the fashion press coverage, it would have been much more difficult for the French to regain their fashion supremacy. *Vogue* even published an article by Lucien Lelong justifying his all out efforts to keep couture alive during the Occupation (*Vogue*, November 1944, 74). French fashion again became the darling of the American fashion press, although by then American designers had gained enough respect to continue to be featured along with the French (Daves 1967).

UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PERFUME BUSINESS

For the perfume industry, World War II began in 1940 with the German occupation of France. This had profound effects on both the French perfume industry and the American market. After France fell, French exports, including fashions and perfume, came to a halt. Once it became impossible for French companies to export products such as perfume and fashions to the U. S. market, American companies began to experience unprecedented new opportunities in these industries.

For the five years between 1940 and 1945, the perfume companies' chief problem proved to be production, not sales. As it had to adapt to the Depression, the perfume industry now had to adapt to war. While almost all industries had to adapt to war-time challenges, perfume companies experienced accentuated problems due to their dependence on natural raw materials from the four corners of the world. Also French perfumes had dominated the sales of perfume in America before the war. In 1939, some farsighted executives such as Chanel's Gregory Thomas stockpiled either the finished goods or the essential oils used in

manufacturing perfumes in anticipation of a European war. This allowed a few French companies to manufacture perfumes in the United States and to continue selling their products here throughout the war. Some American subsidiaries of French companies, such as Schiaparelli, stockpiled enough perfume to carry them through most of the war. The trade magazine *Beauty Fashion* encouraged retailers to stockpile perfumes which would likely become unavailable soon. However, by 1941 many French perfumes simply became unavailable in the U. S. throughout the war. Temporarily, at least, the world's perfume center shifted from Paris to New York. With the absence of many French perfumes, American companies got a chance to capture a significant share of the American market for perfume. The war caused a great deal of upheaval in the perfume business but it also gave the business levels of growth previously unknown. American companies rushed to fill a void left by the French (*Beauty Fashion*, January 1941, 50).

In spite of shortages and other wartime challenges, the perfume and cosmetics industries enjoyed unprecedented growth during the war years. Sales of cosmetics, perfumes and toiletries jumped from \$450,000,000 in 1940 to \$805,000,000 representing an 82 percent increase in five years. Sales of perfumes, toilet waters, and eau de colognes alone skyrocketed from \$45,520,000 in 1940 to \$86,000,000 in 1945, representing an 89 percent increase in just five years (*Beauty Fashion* 1941-1946).

There are two major explanations for this exceptional growth in sales. First, many working women enjoyed increasing purchasing power with more disposable income than ever before. Women who worked in defense related industries, especially, had money of their own to spend as they pleased. Many of them purchased higher priced perfumes and cosmetics which had never before been within the scope of their budget. This had a longer-term impact in democratizing the consumption of perfume. An additional group of American women started buying perfume -- teenagers. These teenagers often had money from after school jobs and perfumes and cosmetics became popular purchases. Two new fashion magazines targeted the young women's market -- *Glamour* and *Mademoiselle*. With circulations in 1943 of 288,672 and 441,378 respectively, they provided media outlets for perfume advertisers to reach a wider audience of potential buyers. The war helped to democratize consumption of perfume by expanding the groups of women who could buy it. A second factor contributing to the growth of perfume was the rationing and the unavailability of many consumer goods such as clothes, shoes, and cars. Purchases were confined mainly to luxury and non-durable goods, such as beauty products like perfumes and cosmetics (*Beauty Fashion*, January 1944, 26).

The American Perfume Industry During the War Years

Once the U. S. entered the war in December 1941, the conditions for perfume manufacturers became even more difficult. Already cut off from the French perfumers and essential oils, wartime restrictions on alcohol and packaging materials forced companies to make changes in their basic strategy of selling perfume. Since many natural ingredients came from France and Italy, companies were forced to use more synthetic ingredients. Coty advertisements in *Vogue* 1943 explained to American women why "Chyre" and "Le Verige" would no longer be available. The ad ended with, "There are no substitutes for the production of such perfumes." This helped Coty to maintain a high quality image even if it meant having fewer perfume brands to sell.

On July 17, 1942 the War Production Board issued its LL-171, putting limitations on the perfume and cosmetic industry. The WPB classified cosmetics and perfumes into three groups with varying restrictions on each. Although the WPB later revoked some of the classification restrictions, five major issues remained throughout the war (*Business Week*, May 1943, 77-78):

1. Shortages of critical ingredients.
2. Packaging material shortages and restrictions.
3. Transportation restrictions.
4. Manpower shortages.
5. Price ceilings.

Packaging restrictions soon became a major problem for the perfume industry which depended heavily on elaborate packaging to create an exclusive image for the products. This was a critical issue for a product which often costs less to produce than to package. One result was that less emphasis was put on the package in the advertisements. Instead, manufacturers were encouraged to maintain volume by concentrating on larger sizes. Also, more perfume than cologne was sold. One ounce of perfume had about the same profit as eight ounces of cologne, which contains far more alcohol than perfume (*Beauty Fashion*, January 1942, 32). Limits were placed on essential ingredients such as alcohol, glycerin, tin, zinc, and titanium oxide. By 1942, alcohol consumption had already been cut by 30 percent. Gas rationing and transportation restrictions made it more difficult for perfume companies to send salesmen to call on retailers. This led to retailers and saleswomen to depend more on advertising and trade papers like *Beauty Fashion* to keep them informed of the latest developments of new products and selling strategies. Transportation restrictions also affected delivery of products so that retailers tried to keep extra stock on hand (*Business Week*, May 1943, 77-78). During the war years, *Beauty Fashion* featured several articles encouraging salesclerks to re-educate American women to buy perfume rather than cologne. By 1943, manufacturers were limited by WPB to using 50 percent of the alcohol they had used in 1941. Attempts were made to glamorize perfume and to convince women that it was not extravagant to buy perfume for themselves. This was accomplished through articles directed at salesclerks as well as advertising directed at consumers. Since perfume uses less alcohol than cologne, perfume was sold on the basis of glamour, patriotism, and value. This directly contrasted the Depression selling strategy of promoting small size perfumes and colognes (*Beauty Fashion*, April 1943, 32-34).

Most of the American perfumes entering the market during the war did not survive the post-war years. However, three important American introductions during the war, which became classics, were "White Shoulders" by Evyan, "Heaven Scent" by Helena Rubenstein and "Tabu" by Dana. These three fragrances' success helped to establish the credibility of American perfume in future years.

In 1942 Helena Rubenstein, primarily known as a skin care and cosmetics company, introduced "Heaven Scent." It was launched by floating samples of the scent on 500 pink and blue balloons on 5th Avenue in New York, carrying the message "A gift for you from heaven! Helena Rubenstein's Heaven Scent." This rather aggressive and creative marketing approach represented a style which American companies used much more than their French counterparts (Allen 1981).

Evyan Perfumes represented an American perfume company with no pretentious connections to France. Its founders, Dr. Walter Langer and his British-born wife Evelyn Westall Langer, wanted to create a perfume for the American woman. The company name, Evyan was the nickname given to Evelyn by her godfather, George Bernard Shaw. Dr. Langer is quoted as saying "We made every effort to have every part of the fragrance, as well as the packaging, made in the United States. In that way, we can claim with full justification that Evyan is the first top quality American perfume" (Johnson 1975).

Evyan's first perfume, named "White Shoulders" was introduced in 1940 and packaged in peach boxes with lace over silk. The lace motif, designed by Miss Evyan, was inspired by her collection of heirloom lace. The name, "White Shoulders" was inspired from a comment by the Duke of Marlborough. At a dinner party given by the Langers, he raised his glass and toasted his hostess with the remark, "to the whitest shoulders I have ever seen." Evyan Langer's trademark was her off-the shoulder lace gowns, so "White Shoulders" became the name of their first perfume. Evyan viewed perfume as a fine art and always used only the best ingredients. Everything about this perfume exuded a classic image and helped to establish the credibility of American perfumes and challenge the French dominance on the American market (Johnson 1975).

Javier Serra, a Castilian lawyer, had fled Spain during the Spanish Civil War and arrived in Paris to set up a perfume business under the name of the House of Dana. Dana was chosen as the house name because it could be used without translation in almost any language. He marketed his most successful perfume, "Tabu" in many countries. When the Germans marched into Paris, Serra fled to the United States in 1940. Once here, he discovered that J. L. Younghusband already held the rights to a conflicting trademark, Taboo. Serra and Younghusband entered into a lucrative agreement which would allow Younghusband to handle all Dana products in the United States in return for an 11 percent on net sales. Serra would be free to sell his products

abroad (Fortune, March 1950, 84-87). Dana introduced three other perfumes, "Platine" in 1943, "20 Carat" in 1945, and "Ermir" in 1946; none succeeded like "Tabu." Dana's sales for 1941 were \$217,000 and in 1946 reached \$5,200,000 (Fortune, March 1950, 84-87).

Perfume Advertising and Marketing Strategies

The volume of perfume advertising skyrocketed during the war. In a sample of ads from *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Beauty Fashion*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *True Story*, the number of perfume ads went from 160 in 1937 to 184 in 1943, representing a 15 percent increase. The same trend can be seen in individual companies advertising expenditures as well. Bourjois, maker of the best selling perfume in the 1940's "Evening in Paris" increased its advertising expenditures from \$189,200 in 1942 to \$717,790 in 1943 and to \$1,105,359 in 1945. This represents a 484 percent increase in advertising expenditures in just four years (Printer's Ink, May 1946, 28-42). Other perfume companies among the top 10 advertisers were Houbigant with a 231 percent increase, Schiaparelli with a 215 percent increase, and Lucien Lelong with a 173 percent increase. Smaller, yet still substantial increases in advertising expenditures were experienced by Chanel with 50 percent, Coty with 33 percent, and Lenthric with 25 percent. Most of the growth occurred between 1943 and 1945, while 1940-1942 were mixed, with the companies adjusting to new conditions and challengers (see table 1).

Table 1: Top Ten Advertisers, 1940-1945 (in Dollars)

	1940	1945	Increase 1940 in %	Increase 1942-1945 in %
Coty	306,124	331,170	8.18 %	33.24 %
Chanel	26,805	60,650	126.26 %	49.61 %
Bourjois	234,863	1,105,539	370.72 %	484.32 %
Houbigant	83,705	422,590	404.86 %	231.17 %
LeLong	72,591	266,753	267.47 %	173.35 %
Schiaparelli	102,925	139,090	35.14 %	214.61 %
Lenthric	136,326	177,030	29.86 %	25.81 %
Total	1,409,563	3,029,462	114.92 %	109.69 %

(Source: Printer's Ink, May 22, 1946)

While cosmetic advertising embraced the war and used patriotic images in many ads, perfume advertising rarely used these images. Cutex nail polish showed patriotic campaign themes like "For Wear in Your Country's Service" featuring women wearing polish with names like "On Duty," "Off Duty," "Honor Bright," and "At Ease." A 1942 Revlon advertisement for lipstick and nail polish featured a young working woman with the headline, "For your double life. Now that you are leading a 'double life' ... number one, the busy war worker; number two, charming companion to your man." In 1943, a window display featured in many department stores called "Cosmetics and Courage" said, "It is every woman's duty to herself - and her country - to maintain her spirit, courage, and optimism."

Bourjois, the largest perfume advertiser and the maker of best selling perfume "Evening in Paris," channeled some of their money to patriotic advertising during the war years. One ad, encouraging women to work, was headlined "The more women at war, the sooner we'll win!" Another ad for War Bonds encouraged

women to deny themselves unnecessary purchases with the headline "To the girl with a soldier overseas... How much do you really want him back?" Bourjois introduced a new perfume named "Courage" and advertised with the tagline, "A fragrance attuned to the times, reflecting the gallant spirit of today."

Another difference in the perfume advertising from 1943 compared to the previous two decades was a dramatic decline in the French influence. The explanation for this seems to be the lack of French perfumes imported into the American market due to war. Those French brands still available had either been stockpiled or were being manufactured in the U. S. The use of French heritage in the ads declined during the 1930's, and became almost non existent in 1943. The use of French names for perfumes also declined. American companies jumped in to fill the void left by the French companies. Very few new perfumes gave their brands French names or French themes. Instead, romantic, escapist images became popular in the advertising of perfumes. Less emphasis was given to the bottle and product itself in the advertising. This can be explained by shortages in packaging materials, less elaborate bottles, and more American companies advertising. The French companies tended to favor advertising focusing on the product while American companies tended to prefer more people and romantic images in their advertising.

CONCLUSION

The significance of this period on perfumes and fashion was that it gave American companies a chance to capture their own market. In 1943, the top three perfume-selling companies were all making their products here. The top selling brand, Bourjois, although technically still French, had set up its wartime headquarters and manufacturing in the United States. Coty, the number two brand, had been an American company since its public offering in New York in the 1920's. Lenthéric, the number three brand, was owned by the American pharmaceutical giant Squibb. Although it would be another twenty-five years before American companies would dominate the sales of perfume in this country, the war years gave credibility and recognition to the American fashion and perfume industries (Alwyn-Schmidt 1944).

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