

Brittany Perry

03.11.25

MC 101

Stereotyping as an Advertising Strategy: A Critical Analysis of Advertisements in *People*  
Magazine's February 17, 2025 Issue

In this paper, I will argue that stereotyping in advertising, while often used to make marketing messages more relatable to specific audiences, ultimately reinforces oversimplified and harmful perceptions of race, gender, and class. I have critically examined three advertisements from the February 17, 2025, issue of *People* magazine, analyzing how each employs stereotypes to market products. By understanding the target audience of *People* magazine, we can better assess the effectiveness and cultural implications of these advertising strategies.

**Target Audience of *People* Magazine**

*People* magazine boasts a substantial readership, with a median age of 49 and a median household income of \$75,000. Notably, 67% of its print readers are homeowners, indicating a financially stable audience (People Media Kit). Additionally, the magazine's digital platform attracts a predominantly female audience, with 63.58% of visitors being women and the largest age group being 45-54 years old (Similarweb). This demographic suggests *People* magazine's content and advertisements are tailored to middle-aged, financially secure women.

## Analysis of Advertisements

### Glad

Advertisers tailor their content to appeal to these demographics using aspirational imagery, emotional storytelling, and cultural references that resonate with readers' daily lives. The *Glad* advertisement fits within this framework, using a visually striking and symbolic portrayal of strength to appeal to consumers who value resilience, efficiency, and reliability in household products. The ad depicts a Black woman riding a white horse in a flowing yellow suit with red patterns and the bold slogan “*Over \* The \* Top \* Strength*” (Over The Top Strength). On the surface, the ad suggests durability—both of the woman and the trash bags. However, deeper analysis reveals underlying stereotypes that have been historically used to depict Black women in media and advertising. The ad taps into the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype, a cultural narrative that portrays Black women as unbreakable, resilient, and capable of enduring all challenges without vulnerability. While this motif may seem empowering, it often reduces Black women to symbols of strength rather than complex individuals with a full range of emotions. By associating a household product with this stereotype, the ad subtly suggests that Glad trash bags, like Black women, must be exceptionally strong and unyielding—an expectation that reinforces unrealistic and often harmful societal pressures. The woman's yellow attire is likely intended to signify brightness, energy, and positivity, aligning with Glad's brand identity. Yellow is often associated with optimism and warmth, which advertisers will use to create positive emotional connections with consumers. However, within the broader context of the ad, the color choice may also reflect another stereotype: the "Sassy Black Woman" trope, which often portrays Black women as loud, bold, and full of personality in a way that prioritizes entertainment over authenticity. The *Glad* advertisement walks a fine line between empowerment and stereotyping.

## **Oceania Cruises**

Oceana Cruises, a luxury cruise line known for its fine dining and destination-focused experiences, caters to a similar demographic—affluent, older travelers prioritizing gourmet cuisine, cultural experiences, and leisure travel. The ad with the tagline “*Created for Foodies by Foodies,*” featured in *People* magazine's February 17, 2025 issue, emphasizes food as a gateway to cultural experiences and personal connections (Created for Foodies by Foodies). However, the imagery—featuring a white woman enjoying wine, a middle-aged white couple holding a large crab, and scenic shots of gourmet dining, nature, and a luxury cruise ship—projects a narrow vision of travel, leisure, and culinary exploration. This perpetuates a common stereotype in travel advertising: that world exploration and cultural appreciation are privileges reserved for a select group rather than a diverse, global community. While the ad aims to create a sense of aspiration, it also subtly reinforces exclusionary messaging. Not featuring diverse travelers suggests that the ideal luxury traveler fits a specific racial and socioeconomic mold that may alienate potential customers who do not see themselves represented in the experience. For example, the image of beautifully plated dishes being carried by an unseen server highlights the consumption of gourmet food rather than the cultural or labor-driven aspects of food preparation. This reinforces a common advertising motif: food is an elite experience rather than a shared cultural practice. The ad’s inclusion of a stunning wintery lake with snow-capped mountains and a cruise ship in the open ocean emphasizes a sense of pristine beauty, untouched landscapes, and exclusive access to nature. This aesthetic aligns with the aspirational lifestyle often marketed to wealthier travelers—suggesting that luxury travel is not just about relaxation but also about being among the privileged few who get to experience the world’s most breathtaking locations. However, this

imagery subtly disregards luxury travel's broader environmental and social impact. Cruise tourism has significant ecological consequences, including ocean pollution and overtourism, yet the ad presents travel as a consequence-free indulgence. Moving forward, brands like Oceana Cruises would benefit from more diverse and inclusive representations that acknowledge the broad spectrum of travelers and cultural participants in the world of food and exploration.

### **ENHERTU - Breast Cancer Medication**

Pharmaceutical advertisements, particularly those for life-threatening illnesses such as breast cancer, are carefully designed to balance emotional appeal with medical credibility. They often use strategic color choices, typography, and imagery to create a sense of urgency, trust, and hope. In the February 17, 2025 issue of *People* magazine, an advertisement for a breast cancer medication utilizes a black background with predominantly white text, emphasizing "important" information in bold white letters, highlighted in blue (ENHERTU helped people live longer than other medications.) Additionally, the ad features a white woman (who is not an actual patient) and includes two extra pages filled with warnings and facts. Black backgrounds are often associated with seriousness, evoking a sense of gravity and importance. This color scheme suggests that the medication being advertised is for a life-threatening condition and should be taken seriously. The white text provides a stark contrast, ensuring readability, while the bold blue highlights serve as visual anchors for "important" information. Blue is commonly associated with trust, stability, and medical authority, making it an effective choice for highlighting key details. Pharmaceutical companies, in particular, use print advertisements in magazines like *People* to reach women who may be seeking health information, either for themselves or loved ones. The choice to include extensive medical warnings and facts suggests an effort to meet legal



requirements while persuading consumers that the medication is viable. A notable aspect of the advertisement is its choice to feature a white woman who is not an actual patient. This follows a long-standing trend in healthcare marketing, where white individuals—particularly women—are disproportionately represented in advertisements for medical treatments. While breast cancer affects women of all racial backgrounds, studies have shown that Black women in the U.S. are more likely to be diagnosed with aggressive forms of the disease and face higher mortality rates due to disparities in healthcare access, socioeconomic factors, and systemic bias. By featuring only a white woman, the ad subtly reinforces the stereotype that the "default" breast cancer patient is white. This exclusionary representation can contribute to a lack of awareness among underrepresented groups and may even discourage women of color from feeling seen or prioritized in breast cancer treatment advancements. Including two additional pages filled with warnings and medical facts is standard practice in pharmaceutical advertising, as regulations require companies to disclose potential side effects and risks. However, this section of the advertisement serves more than just a legal purpose—it also shapes consumer perception. By presenting extensive warnings in a dense, text-heavy format, the ad achieves two effects: It legitimizes the medication by demonstrating transparency, which can enhance trust in the brand, and it overwhelms the reader with information, making it less likely that they will fully engage with the fine print. From a marketing perspective, the advertisement is well-tailored to *People* magazine's audience, which largely consists of white, middle-aged women; however, as the healthcare industry moves toward greater inclusivity and equity, brands that fail to diversify their representation risk alienating broader patient populations.

## **Conclusion**

Stereotyping remains a prevalent strategy in advertising, as evidenced by the analyzed advertisements in *People* magazine's February 17, 2025 issue. While these stereotypes may resonate with certain segments of the magazine's target audience, they also perpetuate limiting and potentially harmful societal norms. These examples illustrate that using stereotypes in advertising has significant cultural implications. They can influence individuals' self-perceptions and behaviors, leading to issues such as low self-esteem, reinforcement of gender inequalities, and materialism. Furthermore, these stereotypes can marginalize those who do not conform to these portrayed ideals, fostering a culture of exclusion. Advertisers and media outlets must recognize the power of their messaging and strive for more inclusive and diverse representations that reflect the complexities of modern society. By doing so, they can promote positive cultural change while effectively engaging their audiences.

## Citation

ENHERTU. "ENHERTU Helped People Live Longer than Other Medications." *People*, vol. 103, no. 6, 17 Feb. 2025, pp. 24–27.

Glad. "Over The Top Strength." *People*, vol. 103, no. 6, 17 Feb. 2025, pp. 19–19.

Oceania Cruises. "Created for Foodies by Foodies." *People*, vol. 103, no. 6, 17 Feb. 2025, pp. 48–49.

"People Media Kit." *Automated Marketing Reporting & Analytics*, 2024, [improvado.io/resources/people-media-kit](https://improvado.io/resources/people-media-kit).

"People.Com Competitors - Top Sites like People.Com | Similarweb." *People.Com Website Analysis for February 2025*, similar web, 2025, [www.similarweb.com/website/people.com/competitors/](https://www.similarweb.com/website/people.com/competitors/).

## Images



## Glad Ad



## Cruise Ad

## Breast Cancer Medication Ad

