

Institution: University of Warwick
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
Title of case study: Selling Consumption: Digitalising Eighteenth-Century Advertising and Consumer culture
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>'Selling Consumption' explored and made widely available a special collection of French and other continental trade cards held at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire. Built in 1874 to display the Rothschild family's outstanding collection of art treasures, Waddesdon was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957. This innovative and collaborative Leverhulme Trust funded project examined how advertising contributed to the creation of new consumer markets. Warwick researchers highlighted the importance of the underused collection and rendered visible a collection that was previously invisible, first at Waddesdon and then to wider publics. The research expertise and knowledge of Warwick scholars shaped the digitisation and online-cataloguing of the French trade card collection, generating a change in future conservation and cataloguing practices at Waddesdon, and the resulting database greatly increased the accessibility of this source to a general audience. The research findings underpinned Waddesdon's 2008 exhibition 'All that Glitters: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century Paris', which raised public awareness of eighteenth-century advertising and its role in the creation of modern consumer culture.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The eighteenth century represents an important turning point in the rise of Western consumer society when the mechanisation of production processes increased the range and quantity of goods available to a new category of 'shoppers'. Professor Maxine Berg's (1978-present) ground-breaking publications have argued that histories of industrialisation need to engage with material culture—the products that were made—and with the principles of aesthetics and taste as they were understood in the eighteenth century. Her research has also focused on the cultural aspects of consumerism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the forces behind emerging consumer culture. The new manufacturing was driven by process innovation and product development. Berg has argued that the upsurge in new products, particularly those which 'imitated' luxury goods from China and India, was stimulated by consumer behaviour just as much as by manufacturers and merchants. New manufacturing was also shaped by efforts to imitate oriental luxury goods using indigenous materials, which led to the development of new, distinctly British products. Consumer demand for these new luxury goods was driven by aesthetics, fashion and taste, as much as price. Desire for such products was shaped by the idea of 'fashion'—by objects which were attractive to the senses—by the pursuit of novelty, and by imitation which evoked imaginings of the original and the lifestyles they represented. Considered by historians to be a French achievement, there is now recognition that fashion also stimulated change and innovation in Britain in the eighteenth century, as 'semi-luxury' products gave pleasure and brought taste and distinction to the new consumers of the middling and trading classes.</p> <p>Berg's work (<i>Luxury and Pleasure</i>, 2005) has also demonstrated how consumption was learned in response to the expansion of goods, to new and more specialised shops and especially to advertising. Advertising was fundamental to the retailing of the new products. It successfully capitalised on the imitative impulses at the heart of fashion, connecting image and text across different parts of print culture. Few historical studies have acknowledged the influence of advertising, yet it was of huge significance in the making of new consumer goods and in shaping product innovation. Advertisements became part of the representation of the physical properties of goods: they contributed to their characteristics, qualities and fashion appeal, all of which affected consumer behaviour and demand. Key forms of advertising were the small advertisements in metropolitan and provincial newspapers, the illustrated trade card or bill head, and trade catalogues. Beginning in 2004, Berg with Dr Helen Clifford (museum consultant and senior Research Fellow, 2004-9) explored how trade cards stimulated consumer demand and defined ideas of fashion and taste. Significant contributions to the research on trade cards were also made by Dr Phillipa Plock (Postdoctoral Fellow, 2004-7) and Phillipa Hubbard (PhD student, 2004-7).</p> <p>Advertising on trade cards or bill heads first appeared in the early seventeenth century, and this practice increased in frequency and sophistication in the eighteenth century. Historians had largely overlooked their potential as significant historical artefacts of early consumerism. In contrast,</p>

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Berg's and Clifford's research demonstrated how through their visual appeal, trade cards played a crucial part in fuelling the fantasy and imagination that drove the dynamics of fashion consumerism. Using a sophisticated interplay of text and image, their work argued that trade cards were more effective advertisements than text-only newspapers advertisements. The trade cards conveyed images of a wide variety of consumer goods, and symbols and representations of services and shops. They also taught shoppers about the consumption of 'the novel', regularly using terms like 'novelty', 'best quality', 'variety', 'elegant', and 'superb taste'. Thus, the trade cards were a form of persuasive advertising, teaching consumers about new goods, how to use them and how to desire them. In arguing thus, Berg and Clifford have challenged preconceived notions of advertising prior to the nineteenth century as primitive and lacking in innovation.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Plock, P., 'Advertising Books in Eighteenth-Century Paris: Evidence from Waddesdon's Trade Card Collection', in R. Myers, M. Harris and G. Mandelbrote (eds), *Books for Sale: The Advertising and Promotion of Print since the Fifteenth Century* (Oak Knoll and the British Library, 2009), 87-108.

Berg, M., and Clifford, H., 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France', *Cultural and Social History*, 4:2 (2007), 145-170.

Berg, M., *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. chapter seven "Shopping is a Place to Go": Fashion, Shopping, and Advertising', 247-278.

Berg, M., 'From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Economic History Review*, 55: 1 (2002), 1-30.

Berg, M., and Clifford, H. (eds), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester University Press, 1999).

Berg, M., and Clifford, H., 'Commerce and Commodity: Graphic Display and Selling New Consumer Goods in Eighteenth-Century England', in M. North and D. Ormrod (eds), *Arts Markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Ashgate, 1998), 187-200.

Evidence of Quality:

All outputs have been peer reviewed and published by leading academic presses and journals. In *Luxury and Pleasure*, Berg was praised for teaching economic historians the 'merit of injecting design, taste, and fashion in... appraising economic change' and for making 'consumption more intelligible for all of us' (*Journal of Social History*, 40:4, 2007, 1036-1038). Berg and Clifford's volume *Consumers and Luxury* was commended for 'making "real" the rather too abstract categories of eighteenth-century political and economic thought, (*Reviews in History*, review no. 162, September 2009).

Research Awards:

Maxine Berg, Colin Jones and Pippa Shirley, Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century', £156,224, 2004-07.

Berg, Judith Rothschild Foundation Grant, 'Warwick-Waddesdon Collaboration', £6,000, 2006-07. Waddesdon Manor, Project Curator for Selling Shopping Exhibition, £2,536, November 2007.

Berg, The Rothschild Foundation, 'Warwick-Waddesdon Sources Development: French Luxuries, Objectives and Archives', £11,500, 2003-05.

Berg and Neil McWilliam, Leverhulme Trust Research Grant, 'From Art to Industry: The Making of Modern Luxury in Eighteenth-Century Britain', £71,000, 2000-02.

Berg, Margot Finn, and Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, Leverhulme Trust Research Interchange Grant, 'Warwick-CNAM (Paris) Research Interchange on Cultures of Commerce and Invention', £42,700, 2001-04.

Helen Clifford, British Academy Small Grant, 'Marvels in the Marketplace: Germanic Trade Cards at Waddesdon Manor', £7,498, 2008.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Warwick's input and appreciation of the importance of the trade cards to Waddesdon and wider publics produced a new model for preserving and presenting this important historical material, changed cataloguing practices at Waddesdon and made online cataloguing a future priority. The digitisation programme created a new online database that, in an area with very few accessible

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sources, offers wider public audiences access to the trade card collection. The exhibition 'All that Glitters' further increased public awareness of and knowledge about the trade cards and associated themes, such as luxury, consumption, consumer culture and advertising.

Digitisation and online database

The project had two core aims: to draw on academic research to tell a historical story based on the Waddesdon collection of trade cards and to digitise this unique collection, making it available to a wider audience. The trade cards were translated into English and digitised to capture textual and visual information. This involved a partnership of two specialists, a librarian experienced in cataloguing trade cards who logged the text and a trained art historian (Phillippa Plock) from the field of print who catalogued the visual iconographic elements. The resulting database was launched online in spring 2009. This pioneering model has created a public resource that raises awareness of the trade card collection and improved public access to unique primary source materials. The Head of Collections at Waddesdon confirmed that the collaboration with Berg and Clifford marked a 'critical first step' in the cataloguing and digitising of their collections. As this was the first time Waddesdon digitised part of its catalogue, the project enabled curatorial staff 'to analyse the kind of information we needed to gather and how it should be presented'. Working with academics enabled Waddesdon's curators to refine content and design issues and to test new approaches to the presentation of information to as wide-ranging an audience as possible. Overall, the collaboration has encouraged a major shift in Waddesdon's conservation practices, with online cataloguing becoming 'a fundamental part of our outreach and interpretation strategy and ability to network effectively with the outside world'.

Increased public awareness of the trade card collection and the online catalogue has been achieved by means of a series of films, 'Unlocking History at Waddesdon', that explore the research and examine a selection of trade cards in-depth with the researchers and Waddesdon's Head of Collections. With the aim of bringing the collection to new audiences, the films are available on YouTube and, since January 2013, have received 808 views. The films were also distributed to the National Trust and other heritage organisations to offer professional audiences an example of the role and value of academic research and collaboration to conservation practices and to encourage the uptake of digital cataloguing more broadly across the heritage sector.

The collaboration has resulted in a permanent culture change at Waddesdon and recognition of the value of research partnerships. The methodologies developed in the 'Selling Consumption' project and the resulting data set has served as a blueprint for the cataloguing of eighteenth-century French prints and drawings. Three subsequent collaborations with Warwick, funded by the British Academy and AHRC, built on the approaches fostered by 'Selling Consumption', including the digitalisation of the catalogue of *Saint-Aubin Livres de Caricatures* (2007-10) and the *Tableaux de la Revolution*. The latter drew on the methodology of cataloguing and digitalising ephemeral material established in 'Selling Consumption' and Plock trained the two PhD students cataloguing the Revolutionary prints, strengthening the methodological ties between the projects. 'Selling Consumption' provided Waddesdon's staff with experience in securing academic funding for the first time and demonstrated that research partnerships can produce enhanced financial benefits. The Head of Collections has acknowledged that Waddesdon 'would not have been in such a strong position to secure this funding had Selling Consumption not broken the ground'. The strength of the digitisation project's impact is evidenced by collaboration with other heritage institutions, particularly the Bodleian Library, British Museum, the Bowes Museum and the Wallace Collection. Developing and testing the database format in dialogue with curators based in these institutions facilitated an important knowledge exchange and transfer of new methodologies across a range of potential users. Database users, specifically curatorial staff based at the Wallace Collection and Metropolitan Museum, New York praised the 'great functionality' and the quality of the 'descriptive, historical and technical information' made available in this 'marvellous resource'.

Public Exhibition

The research on historical advertising and consumer culture fed into the exhibition 'All That Glitters: Shopping and Advertising in Eighteenth-Century Paris' at Waddesdon, March-October 2008. Free to all visitors, the exhibition was seen by approximately 87,000 people. Co-curated by

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the project's Postdoctoral Fellow (Plock), the exhibition focused on the trade card collection and the role of visual imagery and text explored in Berg's work, offering visitors a dynamic and creative way to consider past experiences of shopping. 'All That Glitters' brought together material objects from across Waddesdon's collection and the printed trade cards in a thematic rather than an object-led exhibition. The exhibition curator has said that the exhibition provided Waddesdon with a good opportunity to showcase its collections further, since many of the objects 'are usually kept in store'. The thematic approach gave the public a greater sense of what luxury shopping was like, the types of products on sale, the production of advertising and the imagery of consumption. The exhibition also comprised an audio-visual presentation showcasing the online catalogue. The use of multimedia elements within the exhibition space was initiated by Plock and continues to be used by Waddesdon in their subsequent exhibitions (e.g. 'Livre de Caricatures and the Saint Aubin', 2010).

A one-day conference, organised jointly with the National Trust and Waddesdon Manor, was held in May 2008 to support the exhibition. The event attracted 75 delegates from the heritage industry, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Wallace Collection, the National Trust and Waddesdon Manor, bringing academics and heritage industry professionals and volunteers into dialogue. This knowledge exchange was particularly beneficial in informing Waddesdon Manor's curatorial staff and volunteer guides about the significance of the trade card collection and its relationship with eighteenth-century consumerism, enabling them to communicate a new and richer historical interpretation to public audiences.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Individuals who have provided statements to corroborate the impacts claimed in the case study:
Head of Collections, Waddesdon Manor
Co-curator, 'All That Glitters' Exhibition, Waddesdon Manor
Curator (Web Content), Waddesdon Manor

'Unlocking History at Waddesdon Manor', publicly accessible films exploring the project and trade card collection, posted 22.01.13; 808 views on YouTube.
(http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLm0heW_lk6edpZ1z08UHqXziTe_uHNI1F).

Online references to short films:

Leverhulme Trust (http://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/news/news_item.cfm/newsid/6/newsid/237)

AHRC (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/News/Pages/Unlocking-Histories-At-Waddesdon-Manor.aspx>)

Independent exhibition review: 'This is a mere sample of the vast amount of fascinating information revealed by this excellent project which offers the casual enquirer and the dedicated researcher an exciting resource'. *Jewellery History Today*, issue 3, September 2008.

Media and online coverage:

'The Art of Consumerism', *BBC Home and Antiques Magazine*, issue 190, October 2008 (monthly circulation 61,536).

'French Trade Cards at Waddesdon Manor', John Johnson Collection's Ephemera Resources Blog, posted 06.12.2011

(<http://ephemeraresources.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/french-trade-cards-at-waddesdon-manor.html>)

End of Project Report, submitted to the Leverhulme Trust January 2009; provides information on the outcomes of the digitisation project and user testimony.