

# TV COMMERCIALS' SECOND LIFE

## COMMERCIALS AS REMEMBRANCE CULTURE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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**Abstract:** The objective of the article is to look at the cultural indicators of television in the Netherlands from the perspective of its feature, which is essential to commercial TV - audiovisual advertisements.

TV advertisements have been continuously gaining scholar recognition as vital part of shared, cultural memory amongst audiences. It is therefore worth looking into the current practices of archiving and reuse of ephemeral, audiovisual texts, including the digital environment.

Once any commercial is removed from its original context of the broadcast TV flow and of its commercial layers, to be then placed in the archival setting – its meaning becomes radically altered. Consequently, the question is - what is left of a commercial and what becomes a cultural carrier, often embedded deeply in collective psyche of generations of broadcast viewers, in the archival environment?

**Keywords:** television, advertisements, nostalgia, memory, archives

### 1 Introduction to TV Commercials

Commercials are moving image materials that were never thought of as cultural value per se, products of no the *raison d'être* with their short and utilitarian life span- a discriminated margin within the audio-visual arts, so to speak. As such, they have particularly drawn my research interest.

One can safely assume that commercial television and its essential component, advertisements, have been an integral part of nearly everyone's daily media experience, either voluntarily or not.

Although one would not usually pay much attention to commercial media texts or try memorizing them, I vividly remember certain advertisements I saw in the past, even after the course of time and, more often than not, for reasons other than the promoted products. Advertising materials can take rich forms drawn from various sources as they 'make use of non-advertising ideas and discourses, drawing on imagery, narrative styles, genres and techniques from art, aesthetics, movies, television and pop culture, literature, sport and street subcultures, just to name but a few'<sup>1</sup>.

These materials, taken from the margins of TV programmes, are just asking for a careful theorization from multiple intellectual perspectives. Cultural studies' framework was first applied to analysing commercials as early as the 60's when Raymond Williams suggested that 'advertisement is also, in a sense, the official art of modern capitalist society'<sup>2</sup>. We can consider advertisements as a form of contemporary popular culture, which is accessible to the general public and does not challenge 'commonly accepted values and public opinion [...] As such, advertising constitutes a basis on which the challenges of the art in the same period become visible'<sup>3</sup>. Moving image and film preservation received an official status as early as 1980, when UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) officially recognized 'moving images' as 'an integral part of the world's cultural heritage'<sup>4</sup>, however less traditional audio-visual arts, such as ephemeral TV advertisements, although the focus of some scholarly attention, have only recently received archival consideration. Interestingly, the TV public became increasingly fixated with looking back at advertisements from the past, for the purpose of valuation and nostalgic validation.

Within its scope, this article explores advertisements as cultural indicators beyond their commercial function, with layered sets of meanings, and how the ways they are currently archived can further enable contextual reading of them, in their "second life". It is worthwhile to look into what connotations advertisements do carry and what is left of them once they are freed from their original marketing role and what is, in fact, their second life: how can commercials from the past be read, kept, reused, or even preserved today?

In order for a commercial to make sense, in a broadcast context, a viewer must be able to comprehend the intended message and to identify with its content so that he or she is driven towards the desired consumer behaviour. As in any other form of popular art, advertisements offer certain open, empty spaces to allow their viewers and their imagination some level of agency of various readings, interpretations and experience within the structure of the deliberately commercial message. Thus, advertisements, as communication products of their time and particular social and cultural contexts, to some extent illustrate and represent society: trends, social changes and shifts. They can be 'conceptualised as mirroring society'<sup>5</sup>:

The reasoning so far expressed, concerns the question as to what extent the total characteristics of advertisement justify conclusions about conceptions within society-that is to say, the general cultural climate. Content in advertising is understood as determined by the culture at large, and the content studied (the indicators) is consequently presumed to provide knowledge about ideas and concepts outside of the world of advertisements.<sup>6</sup>

The narratives of advertisement concern products, brands, and organizations, it 'is paid for, and the medium of television is used, with the intention to influence the knowledge, attitude and ultimately (and ideally) the behaviour

1 Chris Hackley, 'Theorizing advertising: Managerial, scientific and cultural approaches', Pauline Maclaran, Michael Saren, Barbara Stern and Mark Tadajewski, eds, *The SAGE handbook of marketing theory*, SAGE, 2011, p. 89.

2 Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The magic system', *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, Verso, 1960/1980, p. 184, cited in Jørgen Bang, 'Short Narrative Advertising and Cultural Heritage. New Options for Cultural Study Research via Digitalisation', 2007.

3 Ibid.

4 N.d., 'Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images', UNESCO, 1980, (retrieved 12 March 2014), [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13139&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13139&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

5 Ibid.

6 Kjell Nowak and Gunnar Andrén, 'Magazine Advertising in Sweden and the United States: Stable Patterns of Change, Variable Levels of Stability', *European Journal of Communication*, 1, 1981, p.95, cited in Jørgen Bang, 'Short Narrative Advertising and Cultural Heritage. New Options for Cultural Study Research via Digitalisation', 2007.

of the target group in a direction which is favourable to the advertiser<sup>7</sup>. For many years, advertisements were considered as products of persuasive communication and were 'analysed and interpreted, directly or indirectly, as the direct persuasion aimed at innocent consumers to lure them into buying products beyond their needs'<sup>8</sup>. Thus, their theorization was narrowed down, in line with currently challenged, but up until the 1960's still dominant, understanding of media's effect within the hypodermic-needle-communication-theory perspective, which deprived the viewers of their agency in diverse readings of the televised texts.

To highlight the more complex relationship between advertisements' narrative and their TV audience (regarding advertisements as popular culture dedicated to the general public) this article is concerned with displays of nostalgia in TV commercials. The idea is to examine how such advertising materials attempt to evoke and utilize the notions of nostalgia and refer to collective memory. Besides, what is the corresponding, added value, later in the archival context?

In order to grasp the notion(s) of nostalgia and intertextual hints referring to the shared and collective memories of the Dutch TV audiences, selected examples of broadcast TV advertisements are analysed accordingly. The examples discussed are commercials from the 1980's up until contemporary texts, promoting Dutch food products, and in one example - featuring children. Apart from seeing how advertising texts incorporate nostalgia and aim at evoking collective memories, it is worthwhile to look at specific cases of reuse and their exhibition modes.

Television advertisements, in their form and by their nature, are media products meant for a precise purpose, in exact time and context. Their rapid pace, short running time and intensified imagery are meant to hold the attention of television viewers who step away from the television between regular programs. They depart as suddenly as they enter the screen. This requires looking into advertisements as ephemeral media, given their short life span in their natural environment of constant flow of televised imagery. Screen ephemera, or ephemeral media, and short-lived moving images have already been part of media experience for decades. For example, advertisements screened at cinemas even predate the emergence of television. Over the past two decades, the emergence of new media technologies, and specifically the rise of the Internet and digital technologies in the 1990s and 2000s, have profoundly changed the media environment in every way. This extends not only to our media experience, but also to storage and archiving, necessary for access and reuse. This media shift has also intensified viewers' exposure to media ephemera, which are now omnipresent, ranging from TV screens on public transport to screens of our cell phones within reach of our fingers, and beyond the limits of proximity in time or space. It feels as if ephemeral media have been brought much closer to the user; it has now become an integral and dominant part of one's everyday media experience, hence the technological advances. This new and digital media environment, marked by an ephemeral experience of moving image culture, introduced yet another concern that has recently been acknowledged amongst both media professionals and scholars, leading to more profound queries: what do we do with these? Should we preserve them and in what ways? If so, to what extent and for which objectives? For whom should we capture and preserve these texts? How should we archive and then reuse them?

Even though the advertisements themselves have been receiving growing interest, so far there has been hardly any interest in the history of TV commercials. According to Wilbert Schreurs, a lecturer and scholar specializing in the history of advertising, until now, television historians discriminated advertisements as problematic and insignificant by-products of television, with multiple stakeholders that often have conflicting interests. In part 1 of the book, *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, in the introductory chapter 'The Recurrent, the Recombinatory and the Ephemeral', William Uricchio defines and contextualizes ephemeral media by remarking on the struggle between networks' 'attempts to control content and participatory communities' abilities to recapture

7 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, 2014, p.13.

8 Jørgen Bang, 'Short Narrative Advertising and Cultural Heritage. New Options for Cultural Study Research via Digitalisation', *Danish TV Commercials and Advertising Films. P.O.V.*, 23, 2007, (retrieved 19 October 2013), [http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue\\_23/section\\_1/artc1A.html](http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_23/section_1/artc1A.html)

and reinvent this material'<sup>9</sup>. The text corresponds to the idea of dynamic meanings of media texts'. With each reuse (including of the archived materials)- an entirely new object is produced, as argued in Julia Noordegraaf's *Performing the Archive: Tracing Audiovisual Heritage in a Digital Age*<sup>10</sup>. Amongst the uncertainties of technological changes, Uricchio predicts 'a continued slippage between the clearly defined textual forms that we today take for granted, and an increased value for the form that we take as ephemeral'<sup>11</sup>.

## 2 Media Landscape and Archival Practice

To better understand the cultural, social, and economical shifts, it is therefore worthwhile to look into the broader spectrum of the historiography of television and its commercials, within which the changes presented above took place.

In 1951, television started in the Netherlands. In 1967, at the time of the introduction of colour television, the first television advertisements were shown. The first years of television advertising were the years when commercials were still primarily text-based and lacked elements of entertainment and excitement for the viewer<sup>12</sup>. According to Alfred Heineken, as he recalled in *The New York Times* in 2002, '[a]t the time [1967] it was believed advertising was an unnecessary luxury, because a good product sells itself'<sup>13</sup>. Contrary to the Netherlands, TV advertising in the United States already had an established tradition. That is where Alfred Heineken got his inspiration for his advertising and marketing efforts, which helped to make Heineken one of the world's biggest beer giants. However, Heineken was an exception and a pioneer in this field, as most advertisers at the time seemed content with the existing ways of influencing consumer behaviour (through text rather than image) and felt somewhat reluctant about the new possibilities offered by the televised moving image. Between the late 1970's and 1980's, professionalization in the field of advertisement production, increased budgets, and the breakthrough of the television that made advertising professionals more aware of the persuasive power of image<sup>14</sup>, Dutch advertising professionals gradually succeeded in mastering the medium and learned how to produce advertisements that were both attractive and effective. Over the course of those two decades, advertising professionals began to emphasize the need for originality, innovation and entertainment. Subsequently, television advertising became stimulating, playful, less explicit and more of an open experience, leaving some room for the imagination and interpretation<sup>15</sup>, with open, empty spaces for the viewer to fill in.

After the two initial decades of television advertisement in the Netherlands, instances of intertextual references became apparent: humour and jokes, use of local and commonly recognizable celebrities, etc. Although the content of television advertisements had 'the explicit commercial objective [and] the format itself differed from the rest of what television had to offer', eventually Dutch television advertising 'took on the form of short movies' that were shown during separate breaks in the broadcast programming, and had a lot in common with the rest of the TV programming. According to Eva Wyers<sup>16</sup> 'mimicry was [and still is] one of the main features of television commercials'.

9 William Uricchio, 'The Recurrent, the Recombinatory and the Ephemeral', 2009, Paul Grainge, eds, *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, British Film Institute / Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 35.

10 Julia Noordegraaf, 'Introduction', *Performing the Archive: Tracing Audiovisual Heritage in a Digital Age*, Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming.

11 William Urricho, 'The Recurrent, the Recombinatory and the Ephemeral', p. 35.

12 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*.

13 Paul Meller, 'Alfred Heineken, 78, Dies; Made Dutch Brewer a Giant', *New York Times*, 5 January 2002, (retrieved 15 March, 2014), <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/05/business/alfred-heineken-78-dies-made-dutch-brewer-a-giant.html>

14 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*.

15 Ibid.

16 Eva Wyers, 'Werbepspot als Fernsehtext. Mimikry: Adaptation und kulturelle Variation', De Gruyter, 1998, p. 63, cited in Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*.

Furthermore, the discourse in the early years of television advertisement in the Netherlands was linked closely to the debate in society on television advertising and this interaction has influenced the content of TV commercials. The subject of television advertising received much public attention almost instantly and was already perceived as problematic due to the multiple stakeholders involved (advertising agents and their clients, producers, broadcast programmers) and their conflicting interests: 'Seen from the viewpoint of the advertiser, television advertising could be valued as an additional channel for distributing information about their brands and products. For the advertising agencies and the production companies, 'it was both a source of income and a new terrain on which they could show their talents'. From the perspective of the television stations, it was '[...] an additional source of income that made it possible to produce more and/or more expensive television programs', and both politicians and opinion leaders in society 'also viewed television advertising as a threat to the cultural and moral stability in society'. Finally, for the consumer, '[...] it was both a new and variable form of broadcast and an often-annoying type of program'.<sup>17</sup> Hence, an important aspect of the early years of Dutch television advertisement, besides the desired commercial effectiveness, was the constant tension, distrust and general reluctance from the society towards TV commercials. This particular feature of the media landscape at that time, among others, might have been a determining force for the choice of content for television commercials: entertainment, creativity and innovation.

Currently, one can notice growing interest in television advertising, alongside growing recognition that television advertising is part of the contemporary and popular culture worth exploring. In some cases, advertisements gain status of works of art and are considered of high, creative and artistic quality. According to Matthew McAllister, a television commercial spot can 'perhaps be the most consistent and pervasive genre of content – maybe even of all modern culture'<sup>18</sup>. As a matter of fact, producers have more creative freedom than in film, which in some ways is a more conservative industry - for reasons such as higher budgets (unequivocal with greater pressure to earn it back) and more professionals involved in the production. In the course of time, television advertisement has to be constantly re-invented in order to remain innovative, attention-catching and entertaining. Despite the fact that commercials may be seen as closer to the status of popular culture and audio-visual arts - it does not yet mean television advertisement producers have infinite creative freedom and are unimpeachable from public opinion or other stakeholders. Tensions persist in the current media landscape. Several, often conflicting, interests must be compromised- the relationship between advertisement and society ought to be viewed as mutually influential.

It is worth noting that some advertisements still seem to manage to 'cross the line' and to stir controversy in the Netherlands, even resulting in being banned altogether from the broadcast networks. This happened in case of the 'Adam & Eve' commercial produced by DDB Worldwide Communications Group Inc., an advertising agency based in Amsterdam, in 2008. The client and commissioner for the advertisement, the Dutch insurance company, Centraal Beheer Achmea, is well known for their funny television commercials; many of them have won the Gouden Loeki award, the so-called Academy Award (which is discussed in more detail in a later part) for Dutch commercials. This time, the client rejected a proposed ad because it was considered too controversial and it could offend the feelings of some viewers. The advertisement portrays the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve meet for the first time. Eve wanders through the garden, and when she finally encounters Adam, he greets her in a high-pitched voice 'Hi! I'm Adam!' suggesting to the viewer that Adam is homosexual (Video 1).

Video 1. Centraal Beheer, 'Adam & Eve', 2008. Please visit the [online version](#) of the article to watch this video.

At the end of the commercial, we see the contact details of Centraal Beheer - an insurance company that can help in a situation when things do not go accordingly to one's plan.<sup>19</sup>

17 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, p. 89.

18 Matthew McAllister, 'Television Advertising as Textual and Economic Systems', 2005, Janet Wasko, eds, *A Companion to Television*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005, p. 217.

19 n.d. Centraal Beheer, (retrieved 17 March 2014) <http://www.centraalbeheer.nl/cbi/cb/corporate/fun/commercials.jsp>

An illustration of amplified interest and attention dedicated to television advertisements has been the trend starting in the late 1990's - the broadcast public became increasingly involved in looking back at the history of TV commercials and at advertisements from previous years for the purpose of re-evaluation and nostalgic validation. This amplification came along with more broad changes in the media landscape not only in the Netherlands but also internationally. Satellites and private, commercial broadcast TV stations were able to sustain themselves through commercial and competitive TV programmes and increased advertising in between the programmes. In October 1989, RTL Véronique (before re-branding to RTL 4 a year later) was launched on the Astra A1 satellite<sup>20</sup>. RTL was one of the first private (although private broadcasters were not allowed in the Netherlands until 1992, officially RTL broadcasts from Luxemburg) commercial broadcasters in the Netherlands and even today it remains the major and the most watched commercial TV station in the Netherlands. The channel is a general entertainment channel with infotainment, television drama, talk shows, games shows, news and talent shows<sup>21</sup>. RTL also owns the rights for popular American TV series as well as popular Dutch programmes including new formats by big-producing companies such as Endemol or John de Mol.

In more recent years, the Dutch broadcast television has begun broadcasting high-budget national programmes dedicated exclusively to Dutch advertisements: 'in 2011 and 2012 there even was a daily series on TV advertising which was titled *Veronica's Funniest Commercials* [...] The response of the public confirms the growing popularity of television ads'<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, the public has also become increasingly engaged. Another form of casting verdicts upon television advertisements, democratized among general broadcast audience, is the opportunity to select the best Dutch television advertisements during the annual election of the 'Gouden Loeki' (Golden Loeki the lion), which is the prize for the favourite Dutch advertisement.

In line with the changes in media landscape discussed above, the archival and reuse practices regarding television advertisements have also evolved in the Netherlands.

Although in Europe the first television stations that broadcast advertisements on a regular basis were introduced as early as the 1950's, in the past, 'television advertisements had been preserved and archived in a much less consistent way than, for instance, press advertising [...]. The lack of archives that offer a representative overview of television advertising in the early years, makes it difficult to give a balanced picture of the state of television advertising [in the Netherlands]<sup>23</sup>. A similar point is made by Jørgen Bang, who states that on the European level, 'what has been preserved from the first half of the twentieth century is rather accidental. Unlike movies from the same period, as commercial products they were not considered of any particular cultural value and therefore not preserved systematically'<sup>24</sup>. In the Netherlands, early cinema commercials are kept in the collections of two major archive institutions, EYE Film Instituut Nederland and Sound and Vision. However, as of yet, the collected commercials have hardly been described or made accessible to the public.

There are a few Dutch institutes that have preserved and archived television advertisements as well as made them somewhat publicly accessible, such as the Reclame Arsenal (Advertising Armoury), 'an institution that dedicated itself to the preservation of the Dutch national advertising heritage since 2001, has placed a collection of more than 2000 Dutch television commercials online [...]. But in 2012 only 18 commercials in this archive dated from the first five years after the introduction of television advertising in the Netherlands'<sup>25</sup>. In the section on their website, called The

20 n.d. (retrieved 17 March 2014), <http://www.satellitemagazine.com/>

21 n.d. 'Kabelraden', RTL4, (retrieved 17 March 2014), <http://www.kabelraden.nl/zenders/zi/210/rtl-4/>

22 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, p. 5.

23 Ibid. p. 71.

24 Jørgen Bang, 'Short Narrative Advertising and Cultural Heritage. New Options for Cultural Study Research via Digitalisation', 1.

25 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, p. 12.

Virtual Museum, users can browse through descriptions and/or digitized versions of over 50,000 advertisement items from ca.1850 onwards<sup>26</sup>.

Reclame Arsenaal, based in Amsterdam, came to existence through a merger between the Nederlands Reclamearchief (founded in 1981) and the Nederlands Reclame Museum (founded in 1975)<sup>27</sup>. The people who started Reclame Arsenaal were, in fact, professionals from the advertising industry.

Another institute that dedicates its efforts to preserving national audio-visual heritage is a cultural-historical organization of national interest: Sound and Vision, which archives *all* programmes of the Dutch public broadcasters including a large collection of Dutch TV advertisements. Broadcast commercials archived in Sound and Vision within the Collection of Commercials is a large assortment, but so far hardly reused and most of the collection is only described in databases and not in the public catalogue<sup>28</sup> ([zoeken.beeldengeluid.nl](http://zoeken.beeldengeluid.nl)). Sound and Vision is one of the largest audio-visual archives in Europe and is partially funded by the government; its collection of Dutch ephemeral media texts, including TV advertisements is comprehensive and offers significant material for study within multiple academic fields, thanks to systematic acquisition.

Today, it manages over 70% of the Dutch audio-visual heritage and since 2007, the institute has been engaged in a large digitization project – ‘Images for the Future’ - to enable new and digital forms of reuse and exhibitions.

The platform dedicated exclusively to broadcast Dutch television advertisement is a foundation with a large collection available online: The STER, (short for Stichting Ether Reclame, ‘Foundation for Ether Advertisement’) broadcasts radio and television advertisements on the NPO (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep), which stands for Netherlands Public Broadcasting, and refers to the country’s public-service broadcasting system. STER is best known for its aforementioned mascot (Gouden Loeki) and for hosting the annual ‘Gouden Loeki’ commercials’ contest for the most enjoyed Dutch TV commercial of the year (Fig. 1). The votes are casted democratically by the general audience of TV broadcast viewers.

Recognized as remembrance culture, ephemeral TV ads gave rise to new demands and challenges that archival institutions have to face: ‘The researchers are challenging the assumption that it is sufficient to preserve only individual programmes’, and that no type of production can be considered too insignificant to study<sup>29</sup> including



Figure 1. Gouden Loeki Award.

26 n.d. *EHPS European History Primary Sources*, (retrieved 8 August 2017), <http://primary-sources.eui.eu/website/reclamearsenaal-virtueel-museum>

27 n.d. *Reclame Arsenaal*, (retrieved 14 June 2014), <http://www.reclamearsenaal.nl/>

28 n.d. *Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid*, (retrieved 24 February 2012), <http://www.beeldengeluid.nl/en>

29 Rosemary Bergeron, ‘The Selection of Television Productions for Archival Preservation’, *Archivaria*, 23, Winter 1986-1987, 42.

television advertisements. It was acknowledged almost three decades ago that TV advertisements and other 'interruptions of programmes are [also] important to understanding how television conveys meaning'<sup>30</sup>. However, 'as much as researchers do not wish to hear it, selection for archival preservation is necessary [...] archives, with their limited resources, simply cannot take everything in and retain the total output of television'<sup>31</sup>. This introduces many ethical and political issues regarding acquisitions and selection of materials to archive, not to mention the enormous pressure put on heritage and archival institutions (especially if they are government funded) in terms of quality, representativeness and accessibility of their collections.

Dedication to preserving all the productions of national television broadcast, as Sound and Vision does, seems almost an impossible practice to many institutions with a similar mission. Foremost, it introduces many practical problems in archiving audio-visual and cultural heritage and regardless, it does not make an archive a perfectly representative, neutral and transparent entity. The question remains: what to preserve? As argued by advertisement professionals, 80% of advertisements are just bad, but if we decide to only save the good ones, we will not have a representative sample (like in the case of Reclame Arsenaal's collection of only 18 advertisements from the earliest years of television advertising in the Netherlands). Apart from the selection of materials, the acquisition of commercials and finding the materials - especially older ones - could be more problematic.

If we address contemporary materials: How do producers, advertising agencies, foundations or platforms like STER deal with the commercials they make and/or distribute? Are they even willing to see them as something that is worth preserving and making accessible outside of a television context? Yet another concern is contextualizing and documenting collections, i.e. should we, besides saving an advertisement, also document when it was aired, at what time, and between what other programs it went on air? For example, such a collection could potentially provide data for a longitudinal research study on patterns in broadcast programming.

The impact of archives and their practices on preserved material is indisputable and the question is how to approach and advocate it, so that the impact and interference with the archived content is transparent and acknowledged by the users.

In the introductory chapter of *Performing the Archive*, Julia Noordegraaf advocates the performative character of archival audio-visuals. That in fact, their meaning is dynamic (and so can be collective memory), it is being reconstructed, renegotiated, and it evolves over time. Different contexts and different strategies of display 'destabilize the meaning of audio-visual records'<sup>32</sup>, as well as practices of migration and duplication (or iteration), including digitization. This alters the meaning of the audio-visual, archival materials. In order to account for the changes introduced to archival materials, and thus altering their meaning, a thorough documentation is necessary, as well as metatadata - metadata about the metadata; 'they [archival records] acquire their meaning in the process of their use and go through a lifecycle of uses that can be traced and mapped out, for instance in a documentation model or metadata scheme'<sup>33</sup>. Perceiving the archival records as performative entities 'requires first a rethinking of the object of audio-visual archives: rather than objects with a stable meaning we should conceive of them as dynamic and performative'<sup>34</sup>.

One can argue that archival audio-visuals are records of mediated reality, rather than stable evidence of history and the past.

As cited in the article, Claire Waterton also claims that archives not only provide documents of the past, but also actively shape people's interpretation of reality (and I dare to add: their collective memory), as 'using the concept of

30 Ibid. p. 43.

31 Ibid. pp. 45-46.

32 Julia Noordegraaf, 'Introduction', *Performing the Archive: Tracing Audiovisual Heritage in a Digital Age*, p. 2.

33 Ibid. p. 4.

34 Ibid.

performativity, we can see the archive as a technology that constitutes not only a record of our representations of the world, but as an active and iterative making of the world and of entities and selves within it<sup>35</sup>. In the article, the author goes on arguing that audio-visual heritage serves as an important source of knowledge about the history and culture within societal groups, and it allows us to create opinions about things and events we never witnessed personally. Thus, it shapes collective memory and understanding of the world. 'Audio-visual material widely circulates in the private and public sphere and audio-visual media are our primary source of information about the world and largely shape our perception of events'<sup>36</sup>. I must agree with the following inference: 'Whatever shape the archive takes, and archiving audio-visual documents is a process characterized by a number of decision-making moments, selection some aspects over others, contextualization, and framing [...] digital media can store objects, data, and documents separately and link these to one another [...] linking objects, data, documents may clarify, obscure, and create contexts'<sup>37</sup>. Thus, the high potential of manipulation of information and importance of contextualization is recognized. Another aspect of digital media that is important for my discussion is that new media enables development of polyvocal (multiple) and alternative narratives and 'afford keeping different interpretations side by side'<sup>38</sup>.

The above paragraph concerns archival institutions and their practices as a whole. The important point is that, first archived and then reused, audio-visual materials and their meanings and our understanding of them are dynamic and determined by many and not always apparent factors. These ephemeral, archival heritage materials are used for and take part in a process of the understanding of history and past events, both on an individual and aggregate level. This introduces yet another aspect that needs to be taken into account when analysing archival moving image materials from the cultural studies perspective. The emerging practice of thorough and systematic documentation can, to some extent, resolve the problem of reading and studying such texts and to help better understand their 'original' content and their intertextual references.

### 3 Case Studies

The analysis in this section is focused exclusively on moving image-advertising materials for specific trademarks, product branding and the corresponding short narratives. The commercials come from the 1980's up until contemporary productions, promoting Dutch food products and portray 'typically' Dutch traditions, with one example featuring children. The purpose is to pinpoint cultural indicators of nostalgia and intertextual hints referring to the shared and collective memories of the Dutch TV audiences. Food products, which offer a sense of security and familiarity, and references to a happy childhood, can easily charge with nostalgic notions and this is why the following were selected as fitting illustrations. The examples were selected and acquired from the assortment of the Collection of Commercials archive at the Sound and Vision Institute.

*Nostalgia is an ephemeral state rather than a way of being.*<sup>39</sup>

Nostalgia as a term 'signifies a bittersweet longing for home [...] emotional state comprised of many discrete emotions produced by reflection on things (objects, persons, experiences, ideas) associated with symbolic representations of memory and with an idealized and utopian past'<sup>40</sup>. Nostalgic advertisements relate to collective and shared understanding of culture and history.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid. p. 9.

38 Ibid. p. 8.

39 Scott Alexander Howard, 'Nostalgia, Analysis', *Oxford Journals*, 72, 4, 2012, 643.

40 Courtney Boerstler and Robert Madrigal, 'Nostalgia in Advertisements: a Content Analysis', *NA -Advances in Consumer Research*, 34, 2007, p. 423, (retrieved 22 May 2013), [http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v34/acr\\_v34\\_139.pdf](http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v34/acr_v34_139.pdf)

For the following analysis, three different kinds of nostalgia are distinguished and categorized. To do so, the framework of Havlena and Holak<sup>41</sup> is adapted, specifying two kinds of nostalgia:

*Actual nostalgia*, which can be found in an advertising text using nostalgia for 'products or ads directly from the past [i.e.] products from or relating to the time period from which the nostalgia was taken'<sup>42</sup>.

The second category is *borrowed nostalgia*, indicating that the nostalgic elements are used for 'current day products [...] for new products or messages that create a 'period' feeling'<sup>43</sup>.

The third category, *classic nostalgia*, first coined and added to the list by Boerstler and Madrigal, is described as 'the use of nostalgia for modern products using old advertisements or memories for the same products from the past'<sup>44</sup>.

Very little work so far has been done on the use of nostalgia as an advertising tactic<sup>45</sup>. However, '[s]ocial forecasters, literary critics and marketing and advertising researchers have commented on the increasing visibility of nostalgia themes'<sup>46</sup> already in the 80's. More recently, it is argued that the use of nostalgia in advertising texts might not, in fact, affect consumer behaviour in a desired by the advertiser way<sup>47</sup>. Nevertheless, the production trends remain contemporary.

Starting from the 1990's, television advertisements using nostalgic references proved to be amongst the top most popular television commercials. An interesting aspect of television advertising is that 'TV viewers often watch television ads without being interested in the product or brand that is advertised'<sup>48</sup>. Thus, the public is not a passive recipient, but rather practices its agency to perform negotiated or even oppositional reading by making the use of the open, empty spaces within advertising texts that offer individual interpretation and understanding as well as individual experience. By allowing the viewers to fill up the empty space in an advertisement that offers a nostalgic frame, the experience of the advertisement transpires on a much more personal level. The viewer himself performs mental effort in order to read the advertisement, which provokes nostalgic sentiments. After all, the feeling of nostalgia cannot be achieved without the personal input on the viewer's end. It can also be that a viewer 'often interprets television in a way that is completely different from what the 'sender' meant'<sup>49</sup>. Apparently, television advertisements can be watched and enjoyed for different reasons (for instance, the feeling an advertisement evokes on a personal level) than the ones intended by the producers, as is the case with art and popular culture.

Nostalgia relates to imagery of the past, something that was once realized but is no more and which we wish to experience and relive again - a feeling of longing for moments that have passed.

Advertisements of products such as food often refer to the sentiment of feeling 'at home', i.e. the feeling of security and safety, being close with family within the comfort of one's home or childhood. Referring to collective memory regarding culturally determined customs, thus cultural memory, is a 'collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in

41 Susan L. Holak and William J. Havlena, 'The Good Old Days: Observations on Nostalgia and Its Role in Consumer Behavior', *Advances in Consumer Research* 18, 1, 1991, 323-329.

42 Ibid. p. 424.

43 Ibid. p. 323.

44 Courtney Boerstler and Robert Madrigal, 'Nostalgia in Advertisements: a Content Analysis', 424.

45 Ibid. p. 423.

46 Barbara B. Stern, 'Historical and Personal Nostalgia in Advertising Text: The Fin de Siècle Effect', *Journal of Advertising*, 21, 4, 1992, 11.

47 Vincent J. Pascal, David E. Sprott and Darrel D. Muehling, 'The Influence of Evoked Nostalgia on Consumers Responses to Advertising: An Exploratory Study', *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 24, 1, 2002, 39.

48 John Fiske and John Hartley, eds, *Reading Television*, Routledge, 2003, p. 262.

49 Ibid.

repeated societal practice and initiation<sup>50</sup>. It evokes feeling of one's identity within a certain societal and cultural community. A feeling of identity, either cultural or national, is a strong stimulus resulting in high response on emotional level<sup>51</sup>. I would therefore argue that referring to collective and cultural intertextual references also evokes viewer's feeling of identity, which in turn has a high nostalgic potential.

There are certain features of Dutch customs and traditions that can be associated with food products and/or children, but these are not always easily understandable, definitely not on international level. Rather they are directed at certain populations and specific target markets, that is to say - people and customers who remember or recognize the references and can identify with the commercial's content.

Actual nostalgia can be seen in this award-winning advertisement of Calvé pindakaas (peanut butter). Calvé's most memorable campaign began with its successful advertisement from 1984, featuring a little adorable boy named Petje Pitamientje (Fig. 2). "Piatemientje" functions here as a play on words: it is a combination of the boy's name, Petje, and the word vitamientje (vitamins) as the commercial suggests that the peanut butter is a nutritious meal full of vitamins.

Besides the fact that peanut butter is a traditional product in the Netherlands and could be considered a source of Dutch pride, Calvé's commercials are aimed at Dutch parents who wish their kids to be healthy, active, full of energy and to grow up to be successful and athletic.

The advertisement is a 12-second-long, single shot of the boy sitting across the table from the camera. The only diegetic sound is the boyish voice of the child talking to the camera. When the shot ends, the closing shot of two seconds' frames Calvé jar on the table and text appears: "kinderen weten zó wel wat de goeie is" ("children know immediately the right one"). The boy, Petje, featured in the Calvé's advertisement from 1984, is a white, blond child representing Dutch features, who, one could argue, does not address the multi-ethnicity of the Netherlands, which is a post-colonial country.

However, this had already changed in the 1990's, "[i]n the Netherlands in the early nineties of the last century, the peanut butter brand Calvé used the payoff: 'who has not grown up with Calvé?' For millions of Dutch citizens with a non-Dutch ethnical background, it was easy to say: 'I didn't grow up with Calvé!'" A few years later, the payoff was changed into 'How big do you want to grow?' Without abandoning its brand value, the 'energy to grow' brand suddenly extended its target audience to include the millions of ethnic communities who had not grown up with Calvé peanut butter<sup>52</sup>.



Figure 2. Calvé commercial, 'Petje Pitamientje', 1984.

50 Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique, Cultural History/Cultural Studies*, 65, 1995, 126.

51 Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscape: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 54, 1, 2003, 63-81.

52 René Romer, 'How the advertising sector adapts to Europe's changing demographics', *Transcity. Diversity Marketing & Communications*, 2003, (retrieved 20 January 2014), <http://www.transcity.com/inspiration/how-the-advertising-sector-adapts-to-europe%E2%80%99s-changing-demographics/>

The Calvé peanut butter's campaign and advertisements have remained consistent in their content and their slogan: 'energy to grow'. Until more contemporary Calvé commercials and throughout the last three decades they have been portraying small children, usually playing sports, and growing up to be successful and active as their source of the energy is the nutritious peanut butter. The brand is therefore applying actual nostalgia to sell products. The sentiment is directly related to Calvé's long tradition of branding, which begun with Petje Pitamientje, and which is still consistently used in their current campaigns. Thus, the campaign has its impact on the audiences that remember the original boy, Petje Pitamientje, and today Calvé's brand is constantly re-evoking the feeling of familiarity and collective recollection, sympathy and sentiment for the past.

However, the advertisements also adapt to their own time.

The collage of the keyframes below shows Calvé's commercials from the following years.

The above commercials illustrate both the consistency of Calvé's branding and its campaigns, which exercise implicit evocations of nostalgic feelings amongst the viewers, as well as the adaptability of the commercial's content to their own time, social and cultural contexts. Over the course of time one can also observe the use of more elaborate, aesthetic tactics for the purposes of evoking and developing nostalgia, collective memories and collective understanding.

The advertisement from 1998 (Fig. 3) incorporates humour. The little boy featured in the commercial lives through his triumph on the football field, but we see that it is (for now) enjoyed in his imagination.

The advertisement from 2007 (Fig.4) represents more cultural diversity as it features, apart from the small, angelic-looking main character, ethnically diverse football players on the field. The young boy is dreaming of becoming a great



Figure 3. Calvé commercial, 'How big will you grow?', 1998.



Figure 4. Calvé commercial, 2007.



Figure 5. Calvé commercial 'Pietertje', 2010.

player one day in the future. The advertisement then says: "There's more to it than you think". Here we can observe how Calvé adapted its commercial strategy in order to broaden target markets and appeal to minority ethnicities as a response to the social and cultural landscape of the Netherlands.

Finally, the advertisement from 2010 (Fig. 5) features a boy named Pietertje (small Peter). The advertisement shows a little boy playing in a football team together with other kids. However, the boy is not succeeding in the game, but at the same time the boy does not seem bothered by it.

First of all, this is a direct and deliberate reference to the original character of Petje Pitamientje.

Another interesting feature, which I perceive as a method, or producer's attempt, to provoke nostalgic feelings, is the stylization of the advertisement and the use of a filter that could give a vintage aesthetic resulting in linking the image to the past times. This is also an interesting example of how visible remediation is used as an aesthetic exertion. Although this advertisement was shot digitally, analogue nostalgia in the aesthetics of digital remediation is something worth noting. Once the boy sits on a bench during the time-out to eat his peanut butter sandwich, we see the subtitle stating that the boy is in fact Pieter van den Hoogenband at 7 years old. Pieter van den Hoogenband is a famous Dutch professional swimmer and a triple Olympic champion. Hence, the viewers now understand why the boy is not doing so well on the football field. The next shot shows us the jar of Calvé peanut butter with the text "Get the most of it". The advertisement ends with young Van den Hoogenband jumping into the water to get the ball out.

The advertisement uses humour, which is an advertising practice often determined locally<sup>53</sup>, as well as highly intertextual reference to a Dutch sport celebrity. It resulted in an advertisement that can be fully understood (and thus more appreciated) exclusively by the viewers who remember the original "Pietje" and are familiar with Dutch sport figures. The collective recognition of Dutch sport characters as well as being able to understand inside jokes (such as

53 Hyuk Jun Cheong and Margaret A. Morrison, 'Consumers' Reliance on Product Information and Recommendations', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8, 2, 2008, 1-29.



Figure 6. Calvé, *Jongentje die schaatser wil worden* (Calvé, the young boy that wants to become a skater), featuring Evert van Benthem, 1988.

the shot of the boy jumping into the water to get the ball out) might be applied in order to endorse nostalgic feeling of identity and belonging to a certain community.

It appears that the attempt to evoke positive feelings of sympathy and nostalgia in an advertisement was, in this case, appreciated and enjoyed by the TV viewers - this Calvé commercial won an award for the most adored ad in 2010 in the Gouden Loeki contest held on the STER platform.

The next commercial (Fig. 6), another from Calvé's campaigns, illustrates borrowed nostalgia. The advertisement is from 1988, which is also around the time when Dutch advertisement professionals and producers had begun using the medium of advertisement in a more elaborate way so that it could be both attractive and commercially effective<sup>54</sup>. The production value increased as well as the creative value. The use of nostalgia, in-jokes, intertextual references and casting recognizable people, for instance celebrities, became commonly practiced in Dutch advertisements.

This particular example is a great case study for illustrating emerging trends in advertising at the time. This commercial was also acquired from the archived Gouden Loeki selection as it won the award in 1988.

<sup>54</sup> Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, p. 11.

The above advertisement offers its viewers a very Dutch, wintery image of a lone blonde boy practicing skating on a frozen canal. The boy then stops for a snack of a peanut butter sandwich and chats with a farmer (freely translated):

Farmer: That's my boy, do you like it?  
 Boy: Hmm-hmm! Peanut butter sandwich, right?  
 Farmer: Yes, the peanut butter will give you strength.  
 - And then you'll want to be a farmer, right?  
 Boy: ... and a skater! Farmer: Then eat, my boy.

This particular commercial has many layers of nostalgia: beginning with a landscape of Dutch winter of 1963, a boy skating on frozen canals, the farmer wearing wooden clogs, chatting about farm-life and finally the peanut butter sandwich. This is an early example of how advertisements, already in the late eighties, began looking to the past (here – to the winter of 1963) for the purpose of creating a certain period feeling, hence we could classify the evoked sentiment as borrowed nostalgia.

Besides the very Dutch and nostalgic notions, the advertisement deals with more universal references of sports as contextualizing elements. However, there is one more crucial element. In the second to last scene, after the boy's chat with the farmer, we see the text "Jaren later won Evert van Benthem tot twee keer toe de Elfstedentocht" (Years later, Evert van Benthem won the Elfstedentocht [Dutch speed skating match] twice). Evert van Benthem, portrayed by the boy we see in the advertisement, is a Dutch farmer and a former speed skater who won the seldom raced (due to its extreme difficulty) Elfstedentocht twice in a row, in 1985 and 1986. In the Netherlands, many farmers practice speed skating and take part in the so-called marathons. Those differ from Olympic speed skating, which are for 1500 meters or five kilometres. Instead, the Dutch ice skaters skate together for 100 rounds or on natural ice for 200 kilometres. As referenced in the advertisement, Elfstedentocht in the winter of 1963 was especially difficult and only a few participants made it to the finish line. It was also the last Elfstedentocht until 1985, in which Evert van Benthem finished as the winner. The last shot is a slogan with a Dutch landscape, "Calvé pindakaas - wie is er niet groot mee geworden?" (Calvé peanut butter – 'Who did not grow up with it?' as well as: 'Who did not grow up thanks to it?').

This highly nostalgic advertisement, with numerous references to both more universally recognizable 'stereotypical' elements (such as skating on frozen canals or farmer's wooden clogs) as well as to less commonly recognizable and locally determined, intertextual references (for instance the famous skater, and eventually a farmer- Evert van Benthem) was awarded with STER'S Gouden Loeki prize, therefore it proved to be (democratically) appreciated by the regular broadcast viewers.

The last category, the classic nostalgia, can be seen in this commercial of Dutch cheese – Oude Amsterdam kaas (Old Amsterdam cheese). The advertisement was produced in 2004 (Fig. 7).

The commercial spot runs for thirty seconds. It is a found footage compilation featuring archival, audio-visual material of the Amsterdam city, supposedly from the 1920s and 1930s. The series of scenes portray the city, inhabitants of the city and busy streets of well-known and recognizable sites of Amsterdam.

The fragments of the archival footage show us the brand name on several things, such as public transport, trams, delivery carriage, etc. This is interesting because the brand name as we know it today, Old Amsterdam, did not yet exist at that time. This suggests that the reused, archival footage was deliberately manipulated and adjusted accordingly. The only soundtrack is non-diegetic, a song, or rather its interpretation, 'Amsterdam' that was originally composed and performed in 1975 by the artist Kris Bruyne. The song tells a story about a lost love and about Amsterdam. This soundtrack also evokes a sentimental feeling towards the city and the past times. The last shot in the advertisement presents a contemporary picture, in colour, of the product together with the slogan "gerijpt voor genietters" (matured for pleasure). The overall advertisement creates a romantic image of the city combined with music.

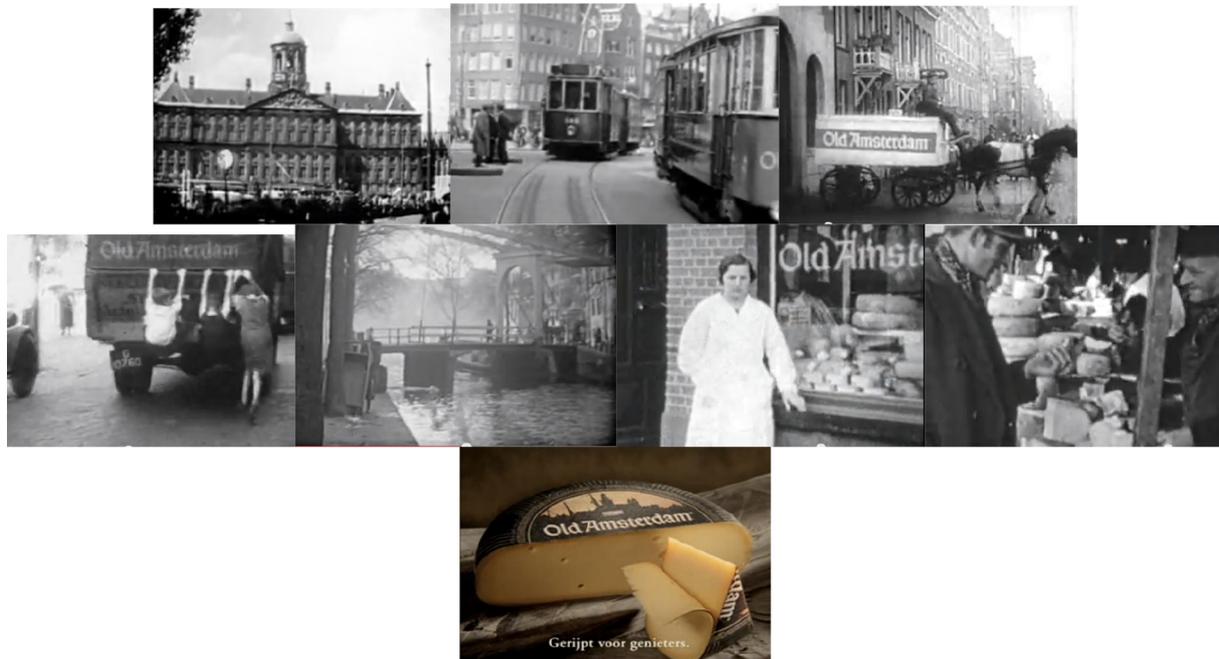


Figure 7. Old Amsterdam commercial, 2004.

Classic nostalgia, as we can observe here, refers to the notion of local traditions - all for the purpose of evoking and appealing to collective memory and understanding<sup>55</sup>. In the case of Old Amsterdam, the brand itself is renowned and the Netherlands is world famous for its cheeses. The way of illustrating the brand and its identity suggests that it is strongly based in local traditions; the way of making cheese had been passed on from one generation to the next. Additionally, to reassure the viewer and to provide the sensation of authenticity and credibility, the advertisement uses archival footage to prove that the brand is truly part of the city's landscape and traditions.

This is an illustration of how contemporary Dutch advertisements can (re)use, edit and incorporate historical and archival audio-visual materials in order to 'wrap' the intended producers' message in a clear and convincing manner leading towards the favourable interpretation on the viewer's end. The material used in the above advertisement has also been edited in such a way that viewers believe it is archival material: we see scratches, jumps of the image suggesting the disappearance of some shots and frames. Thus, a viewer is made to believe it is a credible, archival record by the bad physical state of the material. This brings us to the idea of remediation and how the practice of visible remediation is used for building credibility as well as for evoking collective sentiment and nostalgia for past times, which a viewer is unlikely to remember first-hand.

#### 4 All in All

Different approaches to and implementations of nostalgic notions are clearly detectable in the aforementioned commercials. They demonstrate the complexity of advertising texts. Within a single advertisement, such form of communication combines both the evocation of collective memory and personal feeling. They achieve it by association, stimulating the feeling of empathy, identification, self-staging within the world presented in the advertisement, and the feeling of nostalgia.

55 Barbara B. Stern, 'Abstract - Nostalgia in Advertising Text: Romancing the Past', *NA – Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, eds, John F. Sherry and Brian Sternthal, Association for Consumer Research, 1992, pp. 388-389.

Nostalgia and collective memory go hand in hand. The concept of remediation; tracking and capturing the archaeology of advertisement, starting from physical to digital carriers as well as shifts in aesthetics and formats of framing and communicating intended message, can help one understand how advertising was perceived and how it functioned in its own time.

Given the ephemeral nature of commercials, industry professionals were never concerned about their products' well-being, effectiveness and clarity in the far-away future. They were supposed to 'work' in a given time and place. They are therefore exceptionally honest carriers of symbolic, cultural and social values, promising resources for fruitful analyses.

In most cases, nostalgia is achieved by referring to collective and/or cultural memories of the audiences. Another method for achieving nostalgia is through the use of visible remediation of digital media with analogue aesthetics as well as re-using and editing actual archival materials.

In some cases, producers' attempts are much more apparent (such as the case with Calvé advertisement from 2010), and the hints seem clear to a viewer. In the example of the longitudinal Calvé campaign, we can see that some advertisements, despite their ephemeral nature, *became* part of the collective memory of TV experience and became embedded in the psyche of the public for three decades after the advertisement was first broadcasted. These ephemeral forms of communication become carriers of a cultural capital and memory. An advertisement as recent as 2010, yet referring to the original concept from three decades ago, proves to be popular amongst contemporary TV audiences as they have expressed their appreciation through interactive platforms and events that allow popular voting.

Finally, as a cultural studies approach suggests, the relationship between advertisements and society could be understood as much more complex than advertisement simply 'mirroring' a society. Within the cultural paradigm, this relationship should also be considered as mutually influential:

[I]t [is] not only the correlation between content and the development of ideas and living conditions in the surrounding society that are of interest, but also its dependence on these conditions. If the content of advertising is unvarying in spite of changes in society in opposite directions (or vice versa) this might indicate that advertising influences (or even encourages) cultural changes.<sup>56</sup>

So, what happens to TV commercials in their afterlife?

One of the organisations Sound and Vision Institute cooperates with is the aforementioned STER, which is dedicated specifically to selling advertisements to the Dutch broadcast. The Foundation for Broadcast Advertisement (SUR), which was the first title of the foundation before it was re-named STER a year later, was officially established by the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM) on August 25th, 1965 and was commissioned to prepare and to deliver the broadcast of advertising for TV and radio. A year later, SUR prepared a report that proposed intermediate '*blokken*' [blocks] to broadcast advertising. The foundation demanded the blocks to be three minutes running time and to be placed around the news broadcast and between regular programmes. Not all of these proposals were well received. The "wandering blocks" in between the programmes found no favour with the minister, so it was decided for the blocks to be broadcasted only close to the news programmes. The amount of television advertising was provisionally set at 95 minutes per week, with an additional 19 more minutes for the frame and the intervals, on the air of the two public channels. In 1967, STER would only broadcast before and after the news. Over the years, the transmission time extended and a notable development took place in 1991 – advertising on Sundays was introduced to Dutch television.<sup>57</sup> Around the same time, the commercialization of broadcast TV had taken its toll in the Netherlands.

<sup>56</sup> Kjell Nowak and Gunnar Andrén, 'Magazine Advertising in Sweden and the United States: Stable Patterns of Change, Variable Levels of Stability', 96.

<sup>57</sup> n.d. STER, (retrieved 11 January 2014), [www.ster.nl](http://www.ster.nl)

STER started as a programming foundation, commissioned by the government to arrange advertising on Dutch television. Apart from promoting and disseminating 'high quality' advertisements, it has also become a presentation platform and thus a form of a digital repository, for showing commercials from the past.

Commonly, producers and advertising professionals are not concerned with cultural or sociological value over marketing effectiveness and it is not their priority to preserve their products in an archival context. As to what they would want preserved –archival interests often do not meet the interests of advertising professionals.

STER hosts a permanent platform presenting commercials from the past as well as related projects and exhibition activities that directly invite the public to participate: 'Every day STER provides a stage for the favourite commercials on **WeLoveReclame**, which is a platform grouping 'your favourite advertisements'. The page is dedicated to the visitors, where the users can, for instance, take a quiz and test their knowledge of Dutch advertisements, or download an app to one's cell phone<sup>58</sup>.

The Gouden Loeki, the annual award for the best, funniest or most original commercial of the year, has been awarded by STER since 1995. It represents the practice of reusing audio-visual materials, audiences' tendency to look back at advertisements, and democratized judging that awards qualities other than commercial effectiveness. Through the platform of Gouden Loeki, viewers are encouraged to look into the history of advertisement and to perform a nostalgic validation.

The nostalgic Calvé campaign, for instance, was a Gouden Loeki winner in the years 1998, 2002 and 2010, which is the most awards a single brand has received in the contest (next to the humorous campaigns of Centraal Beheer Achmea, which has also been rewarded three times so far).<sup>59</sup> Although, from a marketing perspective, nostalgic commercials are not proven more effective over less nostalgic ones, the above-mentioned democratized verdicts suggest that the general public enjoys them.

When we speak of archives, in public institutions like EYE and Sound and Vision 'the preservation and cataloging of television advertising still remains a low priority'<sup>60</sup>. Researchers often have to turn to platforms such as YouTube to find their source material. Fortunately, this is a developing trend. Sound and Vision increased its efforts towards accommodating its collections of ephemeral audiovisuals as well as making it accessible for research. Screen ephemera become a 'rubric to explore, [...] significant, moving image forms which exist in relation to the more solid and substantial film and television content traditionally privileged within screen studies scholars.'<sup>61</sup>

The institutes also dedicate attention towards the discourse on the future of archiving advertisements by inviting professionals, scholars and archivists with diverse backgrounds. In April 2013 at the venues of Sound and Vision and at EYE, a two-day conference took place, *Reclamekermis-Advertising Sublime*, organized in association with EYE, HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) and TEF (Technology, Exchange, & Flow) – a research project funded by HERA<sup>62</sup>. The event was dedicated exclusively to the archival future of commercials from the past, and included 'heritage professionals, artists, archivists, media practitioners and professionals, educators, museum curators and policy makers.'<sup>63</sup>

In an archival environment, media products are drastically deprived of their original contexts. Intertextual references, if they are not documented and the contexts are not recorded, they are doomed to be deficient, thus, making

58 Ibid.

59 n.d. *WeLoveReclame*, (retrieved 13 March 2014), [www.welovereclame.nl](http://www.welovereclame.nl)

60 Wilbert Schreurs, *Don't Apologize for Your Commercial. The Discourse on the Content of Television Advertising During the Early Years in Britain and the Netherlands*, p. 12.

61 Paul Grainge, eds, *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, British Film Institute / Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 4.

62 n.d. *Reclamekermis-Advertising Sublime*, (retrieved 14 June 2014), <http://trans-techresearch.net/tef/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Reclamekermis.pdf>

63 Ibid.

advertisements less valuable as historical testimonies. The audiovisual archives ought to strive for pluralizing and diversifying their collections and include multiple voices in the archival processes. Through the pluralizing and diversifying of data and metadata, advertisements can be preserved as carriers of cultural references. As in the case of the STER platform, where advertisement professionals and archives meet, open discourse, facilitating knowledge and exchange of expertise might be the most comprehensive approach to dealing with collections of ephemeral audiovisuals.

## Biography

Krystyna Biernawska is a graduate in Professional Master's programme 'Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image' at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Her interests include programming and new curatorial practices with respect to archival audiovisual materials. Upon graduating she began her work at the National Film Archives (Filmoteka Narodowa) in Warsaw, Poland. She was a member of the Digital Repository project's team, dealing with restoration and exhibition of Polish pre-war film heritage. Currently lives and works freelance in Israel, most recently with the Jerusalem Cinematheque and for the Jerusalem Film Festival.