



FEMSTEAM MYSTERIES: STEAM SCENARIO

Title

Crafting a better poster: How a marketing choice in the past could still affect us today

Authors

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Summary

At the dawn of the microcomputer era, where owning a home computer became affordable and practical for the first time, much of the marketing efforts toward children were focused on boys as their target market. As a result, while adverts for girls mainly focused on fashion, beauty, and homemaking, many of the adverts for this technological revolution focused on boys. One often-repeated statement, which is only partly grounded in fact, is that, "They marketed the computers to the boys and the Easy-Bake Oven to the girls." This scenario aims to look at the effect of this marketing choice (which, contrary to the beliefs of some, did not entirely focus on boys), and parents' buying decisions, to understand its impact then and today, and to work to make a better advertising campaign which would address, and appeal to, young people regardless of gender.

Subjects

- **Computing:** Considering the history of computing, specifically the end of the 1970s into the 1980s, looking at what could be done with a computer which could not have been done before, and researching posters from the era.
- **English:** Copywriting (use of persuasive language) to write the text for a persuasive advertisement.
- **Art:** Creating the 'better poster', attempting to create designs faithful to the style of the era, but with a fully inclusive approach.
- **Computing:** Complete the advert using desktop publishing software.

Real- life questions

The real-life questions that students will be dealing are:

- What do you think you would have thought of computers when they first came out? Would you have been excited or uninterested?
- Why do you think parents bought home computers for their sons more often than they did for their daughters?
- How does advertising change our perspective of a product?
- Do you think it's possible to sell the same product to two completely different groups of people, just by changing the advertising?

Aims of the scenario

The scenario aims:

- *To begin a dialogue about the effects of advertising on people, whether they are young people or parents.*

- *To build an understanding of the revolutionary nature of the home microcomputer era, and how it started an entire industry.*
- *To consider the impact of being a part of an industry as it is born, as opposed to being an outsider, or merely a consumer of its products.*
- *To build awareness of how advertisers use persuasive writing to appeal to a certain group of people, and how businesses harness that power to meet their goals.*
- *To promote consideration of how products can be marketed to wider groups rather than targeting one gender.*
- *To offer a practical opportunity to put these new skills and ideas into practice by creating a 'better' advertisement that might have caused girls to have been included more fully in the home computer revolution.*

Connection to STEAM careers

Arts feature strongly in this project, offering students opportunities to try graphic design and copywriting, often for the first time. Computing and the History of Computing link to careers in Computer Science, and the context of the project, with its focus on self-taught programmers becoming entrepreneurial game-makers, demonstrates that an interested person can gain the necessary coding skills with little more than a basic computer and a little motivation.

Age of students

13–14-year-olds

Time

Preparation time: 1 hour (meetings to discuss the aim and content of the project to ensure it will be executed with consistency in its purpose and message across all subjects)

Teaching & assessment time:

- **History of Computing: 45 mins**
- **Art: 45 mins**
- **English (persuasive writing): 45 mins**
- **Art (graphic design): 45 mins**
- **Computing (desktop publishing): 45 mins**

Teaching resources (material & technological tools)

Materials:

Art supplies for drawing out advertisement designs.

Basic writing materials for copywriting.

Online tools:

FemSTEAM Mysteries game.

Access to lesson tasks for Computing.

Internet access for searching for product images and sample adverts.

Desktop publishing software.

21st century skills

This educational scenario will enhance among the students the following skills, defined as 21st century skills:



- Collaborative work in researching and designing advertisements in pairs or small teams.
- Digital competence through use of desktop publishing software, image editing (e.g. removing backgrounds, handling ‘firing’ on images, etc.), and effective web research.
- Creative skills will be engaged through copywriting and graphic design.
- Lifelong learning and self-reliance will be promoted through the examples of female coding role-models who were self-taught.
- Critical thinking will be engaged through looking at advertisements to determine how well they advertised the product to their target market, and who that target market was intended to be.
- Media literacy will be enhanced through analysis of advertisements from the era and attempting to replicate the style and tone of these while changing the overall message to a more inclusive one.

Teaching approaches and learning strategies/theories
Educational scenario

- Presenting the correct historical perspective to the students is vital to proper understanding of the scenario and its aims.
- Group discussion in small groups, especially around the culture that existed at the time, and on how much that same culture exists today.
- Pre-design discussion of graphic design techniques, such as flow and rhythm, house styles, use of whitespace, backgrounds, etc.
- Persuasive writing to generate aspiration and gender-inclusive copy for the final advertisement.
- Presenting coding role models to the students from the early home computing era, specifically female role models, is expected to help students to understand that this revolution did not need to exclude anybody, and that gatekeeping would ultimately harm everybody in one way or another.

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
1st Lesson: Further role models		
Computing	TASK: Students play through the FemSTEAM Mysteries game, looking to uncover the identity of role models in the virtual environment.	45'
2nd Lesson: The home computer revolution		
Computing	Presentation on the home computer revolution, and how it started an entire industry from bedrooms and garaged in homes across the world.	15'



Name of activity	Procedure	Time
	<p>TASK: Evaluate a series of posters to ascertain their target market, their target audience, and whether they are inclusive of both genders.</p> <p>Presentation on female computer game designers (as role-models), followed by how parents made their buying decisions, and the interests that boys and girls appear to have taken up during these vital years, along with government initiatives and the real-world outcomes for boys and girls in the '80s.</p>	<p>15'</p> <p>10'</p>
<p>Discussion and preparation for the next lesson</p>	<p>Consider how the advertisements you have evaluated could have brought about some of the effects you heard about in the second presentation.</p> <p>HOMEWORK: Download and play the FemSTEAM Mysteries game on your computer at home. Try to uncover a Cypriot STEAM role model.</p>	<p>5'</p>
<p>3rd Lesson: Understanding graphic design in advertising</p>		
<p>Art (Graphic Design)</p>	<p>How can we use graphic design techniques to present a complex idea in an interesting and engaging way through a single-page advertisement?</p> <p>How are design elements used to create advertisements?</p> <p>TASK: Start work on a basic design for the layout of your advertisement.</p>	<p>20'</p> <p>25'</p>
<p>Discussion and preparation for the next lesson</p>	<p><i>Research some 1980s home computer advertisements. Find one or two which you will use for inspiration for your advertisement.</i></p>	
<p>4th Lesson: Persuasive writing in advertising</p>		
<p>English (Persuasive writing)</p>	<p>Copywriters use persuasive language to <i>establish a need</i> in their audience. People who might not want a product can be made to feel like they must have it through advertisements. What ways can you think of that you have seen yourself?</p>	<p>20'</p>



Name of activity	Procedure	Time
	TASK: Students work on creating the copy for their advertisements. What do they need to mention? Who are they trying to appeal to? What will their message be?	20'
	Class discussion on advertising texts produced.	5'
Discussion and preparation for the next lesson	Complete and/or improve your advertisement text as needed so that it is ready to be added to your finished product.	
5th Lesson: Roughing out an advertisement design		
Art (Creating a mock-up of a full-page advertisement)	TASK: Working alone or in small groups (no more than three students), produce a full design of the advertisement to be created. This must include colours, photo ideas (images can be located at home ready for the final lesson), and layout.	45'
Discussion and preparation for the next lesson	HOMEWORK: Locate suitable images to use in your advertisement. These do not have to be period-accurate (i.e. they do not need to have been taken in the 1980s or match the style and technology of that period), but they should be consistent with the message of your advertisement.	
6th Lesson: Producing the advertisement		
Computing (desktop publishing)	TASK: Working alone, either with your own assets or the assets from your group, create your advertisement using desktop publishing software.	35'
	Display some advertisements on the board. Discuss their message and target audience. Are these adverts more inclusive than the ones of the era? Is our culture more inclusive now, and are STEAM fields more available to students today than they were then?	10'

Assessment

Quality of advertisements produced, especially in terms of how well they have been designed to appeal to a wide audience with a gender-neutral message.

Initial assessment

Demonstration of student understanding with the initial Computing tasks, i.e. how well they can identify and analyse the messages and target audiences presented in the advertisements of the time.



Formative evaluation

- Evaluation of use of graphic design techniques learned for advertisement layout and design.
- Peer and teacher evaluation of persuasive language in copywriting task.
- Informal assessment of student understanding of how access to a given technology can benefit or hinder a group.

Final assessment

Assessment of the development of beliefs among students

- *What are your thoughts on the ways in which home computers were advertised to boys, girls, and parents in the 1970s and 1980s?*
- *If you could go back and tell families and advertisers three things, what would they be?*
- *What have you learned that you can apply to your own life to help you to not exclude a possible career from your list of options unnecessarily?*

Student feedback

The students are expected to provide feedback on how the lessons were received and implemented.

- While students enjoyed some of the lesson tasks, fewer than half of students stated that they fully understood the point of the project.
- They understood the contributions of the role models presented, and they were able to engage with the issues at play (the impact of parents being unlikely to purchase a home computer for a daughter as opposed to for their sons).
- The project was spread out over too much time for them to be able to piece a coherent message together in their minds.

Teacher feedback

The teachers are expected to provide feedback on how the lessons were received and implemented.

- Students demonstrated an appropriate degree of sophistication in their arguments and observations while critically analysing the example advertisements. For example, they commented on some of the more subtle messages in the adverts (e.g. 'The boy is playing on the computer and the girl is just watching.')
- The English lessons went smoothly, and the task fit into the overall curriculum well. The overall teaching plan for the term was not adversely affected.
- The Art portion of the task proved to be difficult to execute adequately. Students did not fully understand what they were being asked to do, and why. Scheduling difficulties, where



the Art lessons ran up to two weeks after the initial scenario was presented, might have been a contributing factor to this. Many students produced subpar designs.

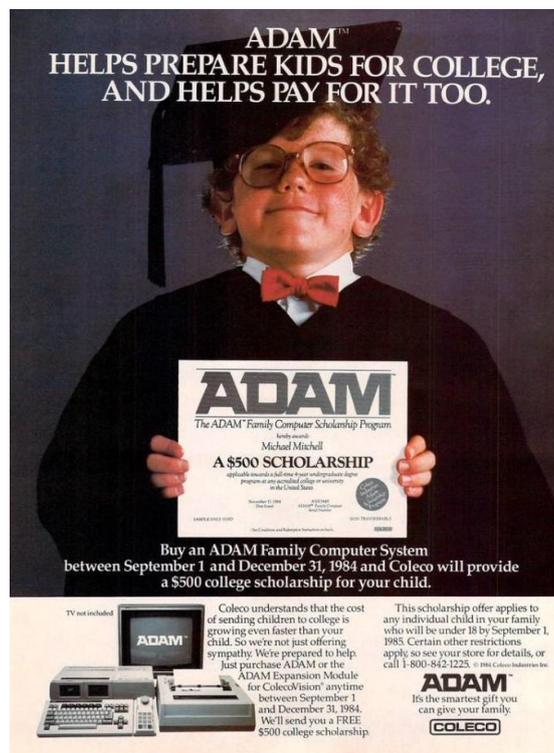
- Following on from the difficulties in Art, the Computing lessons where the final product was created on computer also proved to be more complicated than was initially foreseen, leading to somewhat disappointing outcomes with the end product.
- This project would probably have run better if it had been allocated more time for the creative tasks, and if it could have run at a time when the lessons could all be carried out efficiently and without large gaps between lessons.



Appendices

Evaluating a series of adverts

Look at each of these advertisements for home computers from the 1980s. For each advert, describe who you think the advert is speaking to (boys, girls, or parents), whether you think it might lead to parents buying a computer for their son, daughter, or both, and how inclusive you think the advert is (how well it serves boys AND girls). For each thing, briefly explain **why**.



Who do you think this advert is speaking to?	What makes you think that?
Do you think this might make parents buy a computer for their son, daughter, or both?	Why?
Give the advert a score out of 10 for how inclusive you think it is (give an advert 10 if you think it serves boys and girls well, or 1 if you think it completely leaves one or the other out)	What made you give it this score?





ATARI® HOME COMPUTERS BRING A WORLD OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT INTO YOUR LIVING ROOM.

Press a few buttons and you're creating beautiful music. Or learning French. Or evaluating your investments.

The ATARI Home Computer is designed to be so simple, a child can use it—but so brilliant, it does a world of wonderful things for you.

Learn everything—languages, history, psychology, algebra....

Tap into almost limitless sources of information—news services, airline schedules, the Stock Exchange....

Invent your own games,

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create your own art, make your own discoveries.

Play your favorite computer games, including Space Invaders,* and Asteroids.*

The ATARI 400™ Home Computer is the perfect way to enter the computer age—affordable, easy to use, and versatile.

The ATARI 800™ Computer is for more advanced applications, but it's just as easy to use.

For more information, write: Atari, Inc.

Computer Div., 1196 Borregas Ave., Dept. Y, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94086. Or call in U.S.: 800-538-8547; Calif.: 800-672-1430.



ATARI HOME COMPUTERS.
We've brought the computer age home.™

In selected markets, see Dealer Directory after page 128 for more information.

Who do you think this advert is speaking to?	What makes you think that?
Do you think this might make parents buy a computer for their son, daughter, or both?	Why?
Give the advert a score out of 10 for how inclusive you think it is (give an advert 10 if you think it serves boys and girls well, or 1 if you think it completely leaves one or the other out)	What made you give it this score?





LEARN TO BRAVE NEW WORLDS.

Your kids already know how to use a computer if they've ever sped through hyperspace with Star Raiders™ or challenged magnetic force fields with the new Caverns of Mars.™

And when you use an ATARI® Home Computer you'll also discover how easily new worlds can open up for you.

ATARI has programs that help solve problems of everyday life, like Mortgage and Loan Analysis.™

Or educational programs like My First Alphabet,™ which is an easy-to-use and beautifully graphic way to teach letters and numbers to children.

In fact, the ATARI Home Computer is your whole family's vehicle to a more imaginative, exciting and manageable world. And the best part is that getting there can be so much fun.



For more information write: Invis Electronics,
165 North Queen Street, Enfield, Ontario M9C 1A7
Or phone: 416-537-2444. Dealer inquiries invited.



ATARI HOME COMPUTERS
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