

This article was downloaded by: [MARIANNA Ruah-Midbar]

On: 03 October 2013, At: 07:01

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Contemporary Religion

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjcr20>

“Everything starts within”: New Age Values, Images, and Language in Israeli Advertising

Marianna Ruah-Midbar & Nurit Zaidman

To cite this article: Marianna Ruah-Midbar & Nurit Zaidman (2013) “Everything starts within”: New Age Values, Images, and Language in Israeli Advertising, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28:3, 421-436, DOI: [10.1080/13537903.2013.831652](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2013.831652)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2013.831652>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

“Everything starts within”: New Age Values, Images, and Language in Israeli Advertising

MARIANNA RUAH-MIDBAR & NURIT ZAIDMAN

ABSTRACT *This article focuses on the appropriation of New Age values, images, and language by different sectors of the mainstream in a Western society—in Israel. The findings support earlier research about the shift in values in the mainstream of Western societies. Specifically, this is a shift towards the admiration of nature, Far Eastern lore, a search for a ‘balanced’ way of life, and so on, in accordance with New Age values. This article analyzes how, and for what purpose, mainstream advertisements appropriate New Age elements. The analysis of about 100 advertisements from the last decade leads to the conclusion that all mainstream sectors, including relatively conservative ones (such as academic institutions), borrow elements from New Age, but differ in the intensity and form of appropriation: some are interested in simply attracting attention, while others directly appropriate New Age values. This article discusses the differentiation between the receptivity of specific sectors to New Age and explores possible motivations for the use of New Age elements, such as the more conservative sectors’ use of esoteric elements of New Age.*

Introduction

Why are advertisements for capital investments so preoccupied with images of Oriental practices such as meditation and acupuncture? Why do advertisements for soft drinks use images such as Vipasana retreats and Yoga lessons? What would make an advertising agency create a slogan for mineral water proclaiming it to be ‘for the body and for the soul’? Is it not odd to find an advertising campaign for an established university based on the idea of spreading Tarot cards?

In this article, we examine how the mainstream appropriates New Age elements in advertising and why. The focus is on advertisements aimed at the general public, that is, the mainstream. Our findings illuminate the introduction of New Age culture into the mainstream of a Western society, namely Israel, even in its more conservative sectors.

The New Age is a multifaceted cultural phenomenon that ranges from spirituality and esotericism to psychology and life-style. As a dynamic cultural phenomenon, it gradually matured from its counterculture character (in the 1970s) to a more mainstream feature (Hanegraaff, “New Age”; Heelas, *New Age*) and it is still developing. We are interested in describing the current cultural status of New Age in the wider societal framework, through the

analysis of its appropriation by the mainstream. Since the New Age is such a diverse and elusive phenomenon, however, and its relationship with the mainstream so dynamic, this is a complex mission and therefore requires some introduction.

New Age and the Western Mainstream

The term 'New Age' refers to a self-conscious movement that emerged in the West in the early 1970s. The message of the New Age is its hope for personal transformation, which can be reached through body work, spiritual disciplines, natural diets, and renewed human relationships (Lewis and Melton). Others suggest viewing the New Age not as a movement but as a series of social networks (Sutcliffe, "Category") or as a network of ideas (Ruah-Midbar, "New Age").

Among the core ideas and values of the New Age are the following: the belief in a perennial kernel of all religions and cultures; the interest in esoteric doctrines; a holistic paradigm; the aspiration for the full realization of human potential; the hope for (planetary) transformation; the guidance for maintaining positive thinking and optimism; the belief that we create our own world by controlling our mental state; an emphasis on healing; the longing for an affinity with nature; the adoration of femininity; and the attraction to Oriental lore (Hanegraaff, "New Age"; Heelas, *New Age*; Ruah-Midbar, "New Age").

Research on the relationship between the New Age and the mainstream has been conducted from two complementary perspectives. One perspective indicates the gradual transformation of the New Age from a counterculture to a more mainstream sub-culture (Hanegraaff, "New Age"; Heelas and Seel; Ruah-Midbar, "New Age"; Inglehart). Criticized from both within and without the New Age movement, this development requires a less alternative emphasis, as provided by trends such as the Human Potential Movement or the alternative executives' lore that replaced the previous 'drop-out' style with a lore "more thriving than mainstream" and a sanctification of capitalism (Heelas, *New Age*).

The other perspective focuses on large-scale processes in Western societies, indicating the adoption of alternative values. This research discusses the permeation by a vast reservoir of non-Western spiritual ideas, belief, and practices, which are constantly recycled in popular culture (Partridge) or the Easternization of the West, a process of paradigmatic change inspired by ideas and values derived from Asia (Campbell). A more explicit thesis is that Western societies are experiencing a spiritual revolution, a turn from focusing on God to focusing on life (Heelas, *Spiritualities*).

The New Age has a growing legitimacy in Western societies, which is increasing as its values, language, images, and practices become more familiar to the general public. Thus, the New Age can be described as a spectrum that ranges from more humanistic and secular manifestations, which are quite easily merged with mainstream ideas (Ruah-Midbar, "New Age"), to more idiosyncratic, spiritual ones (Heelas, *New Age*).

Notwithstanding this recognition, there is a scarcity of research providing empirical evidence for the appropriation of the New Age by the mainstream. Our research about the prevalence of New Age elements in mainstream commercial advertising addresses this *lacuna* by looking at the elements of the New Age that have been assimilated (and those that have not) and by paying attention to the *different* elements of the process of appropriation (e.g. values, language, images) as well as by analyzing *the ways* in which New Age elements have been appropriated by the mainstream in *different sectors*.

Therefore, this article contributes to the understanding of the interface between New Age culture and the Western mainstream and, more specifically, of the extent to which the New Age has permeated mainstream discourse and normative values. We shall examine the components of New Age culture that are, or are not, assimilated and address the ways in which the New Age is portrayed, in order to understand and assess its role in Western society and the motives for its appropriation. Rather than *a priori* accepting (or rejecting) existing theoretical research about the relationships between the New Age and the mainstream, we focus our research on an empirically based question: how and why does mainstream advertising use New Age elements?

The Interpretation of Advertisements and Cultural Analysis

We suggest viewing advertisements as texts, that is, messages that convey meaning through signs that can be interpreted. These texts are embedded in socio-cultural contexts, in this case the Israeli New Age and the Israeli mainstream, as represented by several key sectors.

Previous studies have shown that advertisements are presumed to tell consumers which products and services they should purchase and which social ideas and values are 'normal' (McLuhan; Okigbo, Martin and Amienyi). Some even argue that it is possible to analyze the 'consistent stories' we are told about our world by advertisements (Jhally).

Others argue, however, that advertising not only promotes cultural values but also reflects existing values (Okigbo, Martin and Amienyi; Cheng and Schweitzer; Tarn). Thus, it is generally accepted that consumers respond favorably to advertising messages that are congruent with their culture and they reward advertisers who tailor advertisements to their values (Zhang and Gelb). According to Grant McCracken, who presents such a link between advertisements and culture, meaning is usually drawn from the culturally constituted world and transferred to the consumer, often through advertisements. McCracken suggests looking at the culturally constituted world, which can be characterized in terms of cultural categories (time, space, nature, people) and cultural principles (such as the ideas or values according to which cultural phenomena are organized, evaluated, and construed). In order to become associated with consumer goods, meaning must be transferred from the cultural world to the product itself. A creative director must therefore identify the categories and principles in the cultural world that most closely approximate the meaning that consumers seek in the product.

Other writers have suggested that the lack of coherence in advertisements may be related to the need to evoke interest, often by including exotic

elements or values from the fringes of society or from sub-cultures (Goldman and Papson 85–6, 89). Based on the research presented above, we shall analyze the link between the advertisements and their contexts. One example is the question whether the advertising in a specific sector reflects, or presents, a non-coherent or distorted image of New Age values.

Existing studies also discuss the ways in which advertisements appropriate meaning (ibid 88). A common approach is the positive, or mimetic, appropriation of value. This frequently involves an image, such as a celebrity or a style, which is highly attractive in terms of its potential market value. Another method of appropriation is to use a negative signifier for counter-positioning, so that a sign value or a sign identity is established by sharp contrast to what it is not.

Advertisements also function by arousing positive feelings. In this kind of advertising, it is common to depict good-looking actors enjoying life, which elicits a positive response toward the product (Nir and Rahav). Likewise, another method of appropriation is to use exotic images from a given 'stock' (Goldman and Papson 89), in order to get attention or as a gimmick.

This study seeks to identify the ways in which advertisements use New Age elements. Are these elements appropriated directly and thereby indicate identification with New Age values? Are they presented negatively, as an opposite 'other'? Are they merely serving as means to attract attention, indicating that the target audience of the advertisement is familiar with the images and responds to them positively (or in a neutral way)?

New Age in the Israeli Context

The Israeli context abounds with New Age manifestations. Although there are no specific numbers regarding the scope of the phenomenon in Israel, there is a consensus among Israeli New Age scholars that the New Age movement has seen an increase in participation since the late 1990s. There are hundreds of local New Age groups in Israel and the number of people who relate to or participate in New Age activities or rituals has been estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands, out of a total population of about seven million (Ruah-Midbar, "New Age"; Simchai; Tavori; Zaidman, "New Age Shop").

The absorption of New Age ideas into the Israeli mainstream can be identified in various areas. New Age festivals attract tens of thousands of participants (Simchai). New Age books have been on bestseller lists. New Age vocabulary is embedded in the Hebrew spoken in Israel today (Rosental). New Age ideas and practices have also found a place in typical mainstream institutions such as the Israeli public medical services, which have seen a tremendous growth in the incorporation of complementary and alternative medicine (Fadlon; Cohen), and the public education system, which has recently started to include activities such as Yoga and other Oriental spiritual practices (Drori). On the other hand, Israeli profit-based organizations, which maintain rational and pragmatic ideologies, tend to marginalize spirituality (Zaidman, Goldstein-Gidoni and Nehemia). Some studies have shown how various New Age initiators accommodate the Jewish audience in Israel (e.g. Zaidman "New Age Products", "New Age Shop"). It is worth noting that the

New Age in Israel is a Jewish—mainly secular Jewish—phenomenon (Ruah-Midbar, “Current”; Ruah-Midbar and Klin Oron) and that the advertisements we surveyed appeared in the general mass media and were directed toward the secular Jewish population, although this particular observation does not feature significantly in our findings.

Advertisements in the Israeli Context

Several studies that have surveyed the content of Israeli advertisements at different times yielded similar results. There was a greater representation of Western—or specifically American—values, symbols, and landscapes than local Israeli values, symbols, and landscapes (e.g. Bar-Magen Rozenberg; Avraham and First). Except when Israeli society was at war, or when its very existence faced an imminent threat, Israeli advertisements featured foreign landscapes (e.g. scenes of urban America). This trend increased in the 1980s and thereafter (Agam Dali), which showed that the Israeli mass media had a long-term predilection for foreign images in advertising.

In the light of this trend, it is of interest to investigate the appearance in Israeli advertisements of a relatively recent and somewhat different phenomenon—elements of the New Age, which is also a Western sub-culture.

Method

There are several channels used for advertising, such as television, newspapers, billboards, flyers, and Internet sites or banners. Advertisements from all of these categories were sampled.

Sample

About 100 advertisements for marketing the products and services of approximately 40 companies over the last decade, which contained more than one explicit New Age element, were collected. The term ‘element’ refers to language (e.g. keywords, such as ‘energy’ or ‘nature’, and slogans, such as ‘everything starts within’), practices (such as sitting in meditative positions or participating in a workshop), characters (such as people of East Asian appearance), and settings (such as temples). The sample was carefully chosen to ensure that the advertisements were clearly characterized as New Age, either due to the presence of one core New Age element (e.g. channeling) or a combination of several elements (e.g. the word ‘energy’ with an image of a meditating woman and World music). The rationale for this methodology is based on the Conceptual Network model (Ruah-Midbar, “New Age”), according to which a phenomenon can be identified as New Age if there is a partial overlap between it and the New Age Conceptual Network’s associative pattern, which connects ideas, images, wording, etc. In fact, most of the advertisements in the sample contain three or more New Age elements.

Analysis

Each advertisement was analyzed individually at first, taking several elements into consideration. Analysis was based on Richard Chalfen's framework for understanding how meaning is communicated through visual images, by adopting three elements that can be used in the analysis of advertisements: participants, settings, and topics. Participants are people who appear in the clips and we documented who the actors were, their general appearance, and their actions. The setting component refers to when and where the characters or activities take place. The topic refers to main subjects or values presented in the advertisement. We also documented and analyzed the language of the advertisement, its atmosphere (e.g. serious, calm, authoritative, etc.), the symbols and images it contained, and its music or dominant colors.

The data were then classified in several ways. Firstly, the advertisements were divided according to the extent to which they adopted New Age elements. Next, we classified the advertisements based on categories of goods and services. We found that these classifications overlapped to a certain extent, so we decided to use them. The next step was an attempt to compare the way in which New Age elements were appropriated in each specific category of advertisements. Our analysis included discussing the values, participants, settings, etc., and the advertisement itself and considering the way advertising appropriates meaning (e.g. the positive, or mimetic, appropriation of value).

Analysis of Advertisements

The following describes the findings for two main groups of advertisements labeled A and B, according to the degree of adoption of New Age elements. The examples in each group are organized into sub-groups of categories of goods and services.

Advertisements that Make Relatively Extensive Use of New Age Elements

Our findings showed that there was extensive use of New Age elements in advertisements for three kinds of goods or services: soft drinks, dairy products, and financial services.

Advertisements for Soft Drinks

We found that advertisements for mineral water and non-carbonated soft drinks frequently used elements of the New Age discourse and its symbols, while those for carbonated soft drinks generally did not. In the former category of advertisements, we found a combination of many New Age elements, which clearly showed the cultural source of these advertisements. For instance, in New Age culture, nature is hallowed, even deified (e.g. Hanegraaff, *New Age*). Thus, when words such as 'nature' or 'naturally' are embedded in a context saturated with New Age elements, for example, the value of giving, enjoyment of life, the keyword 'energy' or images of the Far East, they can also be deemed New Age elements.

Significantly, many campaigns employed a contrast between the natural world and civilization, which echoed the dichotomy seen in New Age characterizations where nature—perceived as caring—is treated almost like a deity, while Western mainstream values are denigrated (Hanegraaff, “Reflections”). New Age rhetoric presents ‘natural’ as good and sometimes contrasts it with a set of values identified as specifically belonging to the Western mainstream, such as civilization, rationality, industry, urbanization, modernity, and masculinity—values which are often presented unfavorably as stressful and unhealthy. Nature, in contrast, is depicted as wild, magical, ancient, feminine, calm, ecological, caring, and healthy (Ruah-Midbar, “New Age”).

An example of an advertisement that emphasizes the natural qualities of products, where ‘natural’ was understood as it is perceived in New Age culture, is the slogan “Prigat—the only juice with only natural components” (Prigat, TV 2005). In an advertisement that makes musical and visual allusions to the musical “Hair”, Prigat (TV, 2002) used the slogan “It comes naturally”, using Hebrew slang that alludes to other New Age values such as friendship and spontaneity.

Images of nature also play a role. For example, a television advertisement of 2004 depicted a young man drinking Prigat juice as jungle animals roamed outside his house. This visual image suggested that the product could bring the quality of wild nature into our Western modern, urban lives. The concept of nature was conveyed in many other advertisements by a green landscape.

These advertisements can be seen as engaging in a positive, or mimetic, appropriation of elements of the New Age (Goldman and Papson). That is, they appropriate values from the consumers’ culturally constituted world and contextualize them as they are in advertisements.

Advertisements for soft drinks often incorporate another New Age value, the maintenance of a healthy and athletic lifestyle, combined with other New Age elements. A campaign for Mey Eden (newspapers, 2005), for example, portrayed people engaging in different kinds of sports on the beach, including volleyball and alternative exercises such as Yoga and Tai Chi. This combination of nature and health also featured in a Prigat campaign for cranberry juice (newspapers, 2005) using the slogan “Drinking the healthy life”. The full text promises “a unique experience of health and fun” as well as the fruit’s good qualities as discovered by Native Americans.

In these advertisements, meaning is similarly constructed via the direct appropriation of images and language from the New Age and the actors and the language evoke the exotic ‘other’ (Aldred). While the cultural and geographic origin of such ‘others’ varies, they all represent similar values in the New Age culture and stem from perennial philosophy (Hanegraaff, *New Age*). According to this outlook, all cultures have a common core of true wisdom that is best preserved in ancient secret texts and in non-Western and non-modern cultures (Ruah-Midbar, “New Age”). Thus native, or indigenous, peoples (e.g. Native Americans), non-Western cultures (especially Far Eastern cultures) and mystical or heretical trends (e.g. Kabbalah, gnosis) are romanticized and presented as the bearers of many lost insights and practices. In New Age culture and in several advertising campaigns making use of New Age ideas, the exotic ‘others’ represent values such as ancient, indigenous wisdom, the occult, magical means to health, and affinity with nature.

Images of the Far East (places, people, activities) are particularly prominent in this category. In an advertisement for Nestea iced tea (TV, 2006), Tibetan monks carry a vending machine bearing the company's trademark to a temple located on a mountain top. Once it has arrived, the master ceremoniously hands a bottle to each monk and finally takes one himself.

The historical shift toward appropriating New Age elements in advertising is clearly demonstrated by the case of the leading Israeli tea producer Wissotzky. In 2003, one of the years when there was significant permeation of New Age culture into the Israeli mainstream, the company launched an advertising campaign that incorporated New Age elements (as it gradually changed its selection of products). The first New Age advertisements were for green tea. They included the text "To discover health. To taste the tranquility. To fall in love" as well as images of the Far East (e.g. India, Japan). The television advertisement that launched Wissotzky green tea presented the resemblance between martial arts postures and the preparation and drinking of the tea.

In the Wissotzky campaign for passion fruit and mango tea, three different ethnic profiles were shown, one of them in traditional Indian dress. Similarly, the television advertisement for masala chai featured scenes from Indian street life, with traditional Indian music and the cry of a local tea vendor in the background. Slogans used in these two advertisements also expressed orientalism and hedonism, typical for the New Age, such as "the essence of the exotic experience".

At the end of 2004, the company replaced its previous slogan "Real tea is Wissotzky" with a new slogan: "Wissotzky. The right way to live." A television advertisement presented this new concept with brief, everyday scenes of young people who decided to make their lives healthier, calmer, and 'right'. Their new life-style included elements such as Yoga and trips to a natural setting. The actors are shown making small changes in their lives and saying "change a little bit" while sipping Wissotzky tea. The narrator explains that "great changes start with small things". Later, in 2007, Wissotzky's campaign for iced tea featured Chinese laborers working calmly in a large green field, until one of them brings the product, at which point they drink the tea and then start dancing.

The shift in Wissotzky's advertisements was from an emphasis on the objective or factual characteristics of the product, in presenting the tea as 'real', to values appropriated from the New Age sub-culture, such as health, tranquility, and nature. This case also demonstrates the shift in the use of language and imagery in Israeli advertisements in general. There has been a move from using language and imagery that refer to familiar and established features of the modern Western environment to using language and imagery that present the exotic 'other' (Chinese, Indian, etc.) as well as natural landscapes rather than civilized or urban environments.

Advertisements for Dairy Products

All three major Israeli dairy companies make extensive use of New Age elements in their advertisements, often when promoting the health benefits of their products. New Age teachings regard health as a value that should be constantly pursued in daily life, for example, by maintaining a healthy diet

(Dubisch), rather than on isolated occasions. Health is considered 'holistic', referring to mental and emotional as well as bodily states. Far Eastern wisdom in particular is considered to be an authoritative source of knowledge on health. Also, as discussed earlier, 'natural' is equated with 'healthy'. The New Age concept of health is addressed in Kimberly Lau's study of *New Age Capitalism*, which shows how emerging spiritual health practices (e.g. Yoga) have been transformed into commodities for the market economy. The establishment of New Age capitalism relies on the ideological power of advertising, turns to the East for its inspiration, and taps into sentimentality and nostalgia. Moreover, the New Age approach to health stresses the possibility of combining (physical) pleasure with the pursuit of health. This holistic-hedonistic approach is commonly presented as 'balance' or 'harmony' (Hanegraaff, *New Age*).

An example of this combination of New Age elements is seen on Tnuva's 2006 web site 'e-healthy' (with the slogan "Tnuva. Life according to nature") where visitors can explore different options, such as "Press for balance". The web site features three characters, all interested in "correct and healthy nutrition", and each is identified with a different title: fitness, diet, and happiness. The latter is illustrated by a man sitting in the lotus position holding a hamburger in one hand and a carrot in the other. The text discusses how one can find a balance between health and indulgence. The combination of the lotus meditation posture, the word 'balance', the appreciation of nature, a healthy life-style, etc., presents an example of the overlap with the New Age "Conceptual Network" (Ruah-Midbar, "New Age").

A Tnuva advertisement for 'Yoga' cottage cheese (TV, 1999) revealed an explicit appropriation of New Age values and language, combining the image of an Eastern spiritual practice, the value of health, and hedonism. The advertisement featured a group of people practising Yoga with their guru in an open field, chanting the mantra 'Yoga, Yoga, Yoga'. One of the participants is a woman moaning with pleasure. When the guru approaches her, she is seen eating the product and she offers it to him saying "Yoga?". The connection between health and the New Age is reinforced by the campaign's assertion that the product consists of special nutritious components.

The advertisements of Tara, another dairy product company, has promoted similar values. A newspaper advertisement of 2005 for a Tara fruit-flavored yogurt drink included the slogan "There are ways to maintain health, and an excellent way to return healthy energy to the body". The actors in the advertisement were women participating in a variety of sports. The company's other advertisements depicted similar values, actors, and activities. Women were presented while exercising, sitting in the lotus position, and relaxing through meditation. The copy contained New Age keywords such as 'energy' and 'breath'.

Strauss, another major player in the Israeli dairy market, also clearly appropriated New Age elements, but focused on other values. The campaign for Strauss yogurt products (Danone, TV, 2003) adopted the slogan "Everything starts from within". This slogan has a double meaning. Firstly, it explains why this is a quality yogurt—because of its ingredients—and secondly, it appropriates the New Age value of creating one's own reality by means of assuming a positive attitude (Ruah-Midbar, "Game"). This doctrine is expressed in many

New Age practices, such as guided imagery and affirmations (declarations intended to create a positive reality). Typical New Age affirmations are expressed in the following advertising campaign slogans: "Everything is open", "I have good energy", "Life is good", "A good feeling starts from within." The actors in these advertisements are smiling and, playing in the background, is the song "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life".

In the dairy industry, as in the soft drinks market, meaning is created by direct or mimetic appropriation of New Age images and language.

Advertisements for Financial Services

Financial services are associated with serious, solid, careful consumers and with values such as solidity and caution. These dispositions and values may be at odds with New Age values, such as anti-rationalism, openness to new experiences, taking chances, and emotionalism. However, we found that advertisements for financial services made extensive use of New Age images and keywords. This was quite a surprise to us, so we were curious to investigate how New Age images and values were incorporated into this important sector of the mainstream.

Our main finding is that advertisements for financial services appropriate New Age images, settings, and language to a great extent. We divide the advertisements for financial services into two categories: the first comprises advertisements with direct or mimetic appropriation of New Age images, language, and, occasionally, also values; the second category includes advertisements that use New Age elements merely as a gimmick or as a means to attract attention. In this category, we find humor and sometimes a hint of ridicule, but the New Age elements were not presented in an entirely invalid manner.

An example of the first category is an advertisement of the Harel insurance company (homepage, 2007) showing a man lying in the grass with his eyes closed. The advertisement conveys the message of 'peace of mind', substituting the financial security implied by this expression with a spiritual message borrowed from New Age discourse. The combination of elements in the advertisement represents a clear, direct appropriation of New Age culture.

The second category consisted of advertisements that used New Age elements as a means to attract attention. Examples included several newspaper advertisements of major Israeli banks, featuring East Asian religious and spiritual symbols rather than geographic, touristic or technological images. The advertisements contained pictures of temples, images of the Buddha, the profile of an Asian man meditating, and so on (Dikla, newspapers, 2005–2006).

In some cases, advertisements do not clearly fall into one category of appropriation. An example is an advertisement for financial services from the Israel Securities Authority (TV, 2007). The advertisement showed ten people—five men and five women. The coordinator of the group is a slightly older female. The participants are sitting in a room, their chairs forming a circle, and the environment is semi-formal. The situation resembles the setting of a support group. The participants take turns talking, with the other group members responding:

Anonymous man: God, give me the power to distinguish between stocks and debentures... I'm going out of my mind!

Group members nod their heads in empathy.

Kobi: Hello. My name is Kobi. I think that investing in the stock market is not for me.

Female mentor: We love you, Kobi.

Group members clap and repeat the mentor's words.

Kobi smiles.

Nurit (excited, crying): I always wanted to, but I did not dare!

Female mentor: We love you, Nurit.

Everybody claps.

Nurit wipes her nose.

Masculine narrator: Are you afraid of investing in the stock market? Before you decide, consult, read, understand. Visit the web site...

This advertisement acknowledges that people have difficulty understanding financial terms and making financial decisions. It recommends a government organization that assists consumers by providing information and advice. Indeed, there is exaggeration in the presentation of the participants' anxieties, but the advertisement offers a government service that promises to alleviate those feelings through the provision of professional information. Thus, it hesitantly appropriates the idea that it is legitimate to have and to express emotions of uncertainty and fear, which corresponds to New Age values (Heelas, "Expressive").

To summarize, unlike advertisements for milk products and soft drinks, where meaning is created by direct or mimetic appropriation of cultural elements from the New Age, advertisements for financial services appropriate New Age images and language chiefly to evoke interest, surprise, and humor, in order to attract the consumer's attention (Nir and Rahav). Nevertheless, we assert that the choice of appropriating New Age elements indicates an open, presumably positive attitude toward the New Age culture among this specific target audience—the upper middle class.

Advertisements of Goods that make Occasional Use of New Age Elements

Advertisements for Higher Education

Like firms offering financial services, institutions of higher education can be considered paragons of the mainstream. We found that, in spite of their conservative, professional, and rational image, they, too, borrow elements from the New Age in their advertisements. In general, advertisements for institutions and programs with full academic recognition contain fewer New Age elements than advertisements for colleges or semi-academic programs. This tendency may be related to the fact that individuals and institutions

associated with academia in Israel tend to be more conservative and, therefore, more reluctant to be identified with the New Age.

Like advertisements for soft drinks and milk products, advertisements for colleges directly appropriate common New Age values, such as 'nature', and employ New Age actors such as exotic 'others'. For example, advertisements for the Kinneret College (Internet banners and homepage, 2005–2006) promoted the values of community life and living close to 'nature'. The college was presented as an alternative to a large, urban university campus. The text said: "Concentrate. Here it is easy. The silence for studying." Advertisements for the Sapir College (Internet banners, 2004) presented the exotic 'other' in the form of an Asian-looking monk in a meditation posture. The text said: "We concentrate on what matters most." The text has multiple meanings—concentration in meditation, concentration on studies, and concentration on the important criteria in choosing a college.

Several advertisements for colleges even made use of symbols and texts that suggested New Age esoteric practices. In a campaign for a diploma course (Internet banners, 2006), the Open University used a simulation of laying Tarot-like cards. Advertisements for the Sami Shimon College promoted the college as an institute whose alumni are abducted to the job market, alluding to the belief in abductions by aliens found in alternative spiritualities (Internet banners, 2006). Finally, a Madison College advertisement for copy-writing (Internet banners, 2007) presented a teaspoon that moved across the screen, with the following text: "Want to move the products with the power of thought?"

These references to esotericism might reflect on the target audience for these higher education programs: young middle-class Israelis, who are especially inclined toward esoteric beliefs (Canetti–Nisim) and who have been exposed to New Age culture more than the general public.

Advertisements for Communication Services

Advertisements for communication services frequently use esoteric New Age images, language, and practices. Again, like the target audience of institutions of higher education, their target audience is sophisticated, young, middle-class people, who have been exposed to the New Age and might be interested in spiritual as well as technological innovations. In an advertisement for Bezeq telephone services (newspapers, 2003), the slogan "empower yourself" was used to promote the company's switchboard. A character in another campaign for this company was a parrot assuming the role of a master (dressed in typical Asian guru garb) which discovered 'the secrets of the Internet' (2007–2008). Similarly, an advertising campaign for Cellcom, a cellular telephone company (2006), portrayed a woman reading cards, an esoteric practice identified with New Age culture. Another Bezeq advertisement (newspapers, 2009) offered a deal for communication services with a séance board in the background and the following pitch: "With such a deal, it is worth communicating." Here, the word 'communicating' (in Hebrew) has a double meaning: telephoning and channeling.

Advertisements for Cars

Several advertisements for cars have directly appropriated concepts from New Age discourse, such as leadership and work/life balance, as well as images and values. For example, Subaru's advertising campaign used a well-known New Age book by Robin Sharma, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. In 2003, the company issued a brochure based on this book. The front page showed a Tibetan monk and the text "I sold my Lamborghini, too". The following pages contained photos of new cars and a sentence describing a leadership principle in the fashion of Sharma's book. The quotations suggested the vehicles' attributes, using wordings that have double meanings. Another example is the Champion Motors advertisement for an executive car in a business magazine (2009). The advertisement contained the slogan "Skoda Superb—the Yin and Yang of the world of transportation" and included interviews with three senior Israeli executives who responded to the question "Work/life balance—what does it mean to you?". The executives talked about topics such as the need to enjoy their work, well-being, and meditation. The advertisement also included a short questionnaire about work/life balance and suggested that buyers would receive a copy of Robin Sharma's book as a gift.

Another example of direct appropriation of New Age values can be found in the Peugeot advertisement of 2005, which showed a car with a sticker (graphically designed in the style of New Age Israeli stickers) that said "Dreams come true". The use of this New Age-style slogan delivers the main message of the campaign, which is that the relatively low price of the new vehicle allows the purchaser to fulfill his/her dream of buying the car. This campaign incorporated additional New Age elements such as guided imagery and Indian music.

To summarize, advertisements for cars make occasional use of assorted New Age elements. Along with New Age ideas and beliefs (e.g. Yin-Yang, miracles), the campaigns tend to stress New Age life-style values (e.g. leadership, balancing work and family). These values, presented in a New Age style, are probably intended to attract upper middle-class Israelis, the target audience for this category of goods.

Discussion and Conclusions

Several key sectors of the Israeli mainstream were found to be borrowing from the New Age, including the relatively conservative sectors. The only difference between the sectors was found in the intensity and manner of appropriation and the kind of elements being appropriated. This, in itself, was an interesting finding, as it showed how deeply ingrained New Age now is in the public life of the mainstream, far from the days when the New Age was a counterculture.

We found that the appropriation of New Age elements in advertisements occurred in two ways. One was by direct appropriation, by borrowing or imitating a New Age value, image or term, in order to enhance the advertised service or product. The second was merely aimed at attracting attention, with no real identification with New Age values. Yet it is important to note the absence of a counter position of the New Age or of it being used as a negative

signifier. In other words, even when the New Age was ridiculed, it was never explicitly negated.

Our data show that the products intended for a wider audience (soft drinks and milk products) tend to present New Age elements using *direct appropriation*. A mimetic appropriation of the New Age also serves relatively conservative sectors and brands, most likely in order to refresh their market image and to get attention.

Among the *main* New Age elements that appear in advertisements, we find nature, health, emotional expression, peace of mind, Far Eastern wisdom, balance, femininity, and transformation. New Age elements that rarely appear are the more esoteric ones, such as channeling, UFOs, and paganism. Some elements, which are particularly identified with the New Age, were never used, such as angels, Reiki, and the Atlantis myth.

The elements that feature in advertisements reflect the more humanistic/expressivistic range within the broad spectrum of New Age modes (Heelas, *New Age, "Expressive"*). (The exceptional cases, which use esoteric New Age elements, do so merely to attract attention and this mainly applies to advertisements intended for a younger audience).

In conclusion, this study reviewed the *differentiation of the degree of receptiveness that is typical of different mainstream sectors toward an array of New Age elements*. The prevalence of New Age elements in mainstream advertising suggests that the target audiences have changed and that the general public has become more willing to purchase products with New Age associations. The consumers actually feel 'at home' with the New Age style which is in fact incorporated in their "culturally constituted world" (McCracken). However, the differences between sectors (e.g. in level of education) are reflected in the 'cultural constituted world' of consumers in the different sectors that we studied and hence in the way New Age elements have been appropriated in advertisements.

The findings reflect the growing popularity of New Age images and values within the vast and profound transformative processes that are taking place in Western societies, at the heart of the mainstream. The shift in values as indicated in Israeli society is in accord with various studies that strive to describe the transformative processes in Western societies, which go under generalized headings such as "the silent revolution" (Inglehart), "the spiritual revolution" (Heelas, *Spiritualities*), "the Easternization of the West", etc. (e.g. Partridge). Current Western societies tend to adopt the 'softer' and 'lighter' spiritual values, stressing intimate issues, emotions, relationships, the body, daily pleasures, and an interest in mysticism.

The findings that pertain to the most conservative sectors of the mainstream, and the way they cope with the cultural transformative processes in Western societies, are of special interest. These sectors seek ways to join the new trends. They wish to refresh their image in view of the new developments and thereby to join the emergent paradigm. To this end, they use the image bank (Goldman and Papson) provided by the New Age. Somewhat paradoxically, this interest has led them to use the more exotic New Age elements. In these cases, we found a voluntary encounter between the ultimate conservative mainstream and what is still perceived as the cultural fringe or counterculture. Although this intersection might include an edge that ridicules the New Age, and a pronounced accent of its cultural marginality, it is evident that, in time,

this, too, will contribute to the growing acceptance of the New Age as a legitimate cultural option.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 806/02).

Marianna Ruah-Midbar is head of the Department of Mysticism & Spiritualities at Zefat Academic College and a lecturer at the University of Haifa, Israel, where she has initiated (in 2009) and leads the annual Israeli Conference for the Study of Current Spiritualities (ICSCS). Her research interests are current alternative spiritualities, especially current alternative Jewish spiritualities, New Age in Israel, and cyber-spiritualities, seen from an interdisciplinary cultural perspective. Nurit Zaidman is the Area Head of Strategy and International Management and Professor at the Department of Business Administration at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. She graduated from the Department of Anthropology at Temple University, Philadelphia. Her current research focuses on global teams and on New Age and spirituality in organizations. CORRESPONDENCE: Marianna Ruah-Midbar, Zefat Academic College, 11th Jerusalem St., Zefat 13206, Israel.

REFERENCES

- Agam Dali, Avivit. "Cultural Dimensions of Israeli Advertising: Representation of Landscape." MA Dissertation. Jerusalem: The Hebrew U of Jerusalem, 2007. [in Hebrew]
- Aldred, Lisa. "Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality." *American Indian Quarterly* 24.3 (2000): 329–52.
- Avraham, Eli, and Anat First. "'I Buy American': The American Image as Reflected in Israeli Advertising." *Journal of Communication* 53 (2003): 282–99.
- Bar-Magen Rozenberg, Meirav. "The Reflection of Changes in the Values of Israeli Society in Written Advertisements." MA Dissertation. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan U, 2000. [in Hebrew]
- Campbell, Colin. *The Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007.
- Canetti-Nisim, Daphna. "Democracy and Religious and Parareligious Beliefs in Israel: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives." PhD Dissertation. Haifa: U of Haifa, 2002. [in Hebrew]
- Chalfen, Richard. *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Ohio: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1987.
- Cheng, Hong, and John C. Schweitzer. "Cultural Values Reflected in Chinese and U.S. Television Commercials." *Journal of Advertising Research* 36.3 (1996): 27–45.
- Cohen, Moshe. "Complementary Medicine Paving its Way to the Establishment in Israel: Points of Intersection: Description and Analysis." PhD Dissertation. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan U, 2009. [in Hebrew]
- Drori, Shoham. "Yoga in the Elementary School: A Glocal Phenomenon in the Israeli Main-Stream." MA Dissertation. Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv U, 2006. [in Hebrew]
- Dubisch, Jill. "You Are What You Eat: Religious Aspects of the Health Food Movement." Eds. Susan P. Montague, and William Arens. *The American Dimension: Culture Myths and Social Realities*. Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 1981. 115–27.
- Fadlon, Judith. *Negotiating the Holistic Turn: The Domestication of Alternative Medicine*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2005.
- Goldman, Robert, and Stephen Papson. "Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning." Eds. Juliet Schor, and Douglas B. Holt. *The Consumer Society Reader*. New York: The New P, 2000. 81–98.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- . "Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature." Eds. Joanne Pearson, Richard A. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel. *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998. 22–32.

- . "New Age Religion." Eds. Linda Woodhead et al. *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 249–63.
- Heelas, Paul. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
- . "Expressive Spirituality and Humanistic Expressivism: Sources of Significance beyond Church and Chapel." Eds. Steven Sutcliffe, and Marion Bowman. *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000. 237–54.
- . *Spiritualities of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- Heelas, Paul, and Benjamin Seel. "An Aging New Age?" Eds. Grace Davie, Linda Woodhead, and Paul Heelas. *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. 229–47.
- Inglehart, Ronald, ed. *Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Surveys*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Jhally, Sut. *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Lewis, James R., and J. Gordon Melton. "Introduction." Eds. James R. Lewis, and J. Gordon Melton. *Perspectives on the New Age*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1992. ix–xii.
- Lau, Kimberly. *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden*. Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000.
- McCracken, Grant. "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods." *Journal of Consumer Research* 13 (1988): 71–84.
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Nir, Avi, and Ayala Rahav. *Television Advertising*. Tel Aviv: Meter, 1993. [in Hebrew]
- Okigbo, Charles, Drew Martin, and Osabuohien Amienyi. "Our Ads 'R US: An Exploratory Content Analysis of American Advertisements." *Qualitative Market Research* 8 (2005): 312–26.
- Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Volume 1. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. London: T & T Clark, 2004.
- Rosental, Ruvik. *The Joy of Language*. Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2004. [in Hebrew]
- Ruah-Midbar, Marianna. "The New Age Culture in Israel: A Methodological Introduction and the 'Conceptual Network'." PhD Dissertation. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan U, 2006. [in Hebrew]
- . "Current Jewish Spiritualities in Israel: A New Age." *Modern Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 32.1 (2012): 102–24.
- . "'It's a Game Everybody's already Playing': Secularized and Spiritualized Versions of the Creating our Reality Theme in the Alternative Spirituality Discourse." (Forthcoming)
- Ruah-Midbar, Marianna, and Adam Klin Oron. "Jew Age: Jewish Praxis in Israeli New Age Discourse." *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies* 5 (2010): 33–63.
- Sharma, Robin. *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari: A Fable about Fulfilling Your Dreams & Reaching Your Destiny*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997.
- Simchai, Dalit. "Tsoakim Belahash: FrikimAl Derech hamelech befastival Haidan Hahadash." Ed. Iddo Tavori. *Rokdim Besede Kotzim: Haidan Hahadash Beisrael [Dancing in a Thorn Field: The New Age in Israel]*. Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hamehuhad, 2007. 148–82. [in Hebrew]
- Sutcliffe, Steven. "Category Formation and the History of 'New Age'." *Culture and Religion* 4 (2003): 5–29.
- Tarn, David. "Measuring Female Role Portrayals in Asian Advertising: Taxonomy and Comparative Study between Japan and Taiwan." *Journal of Promotion Management* 7 (2001): 91–115.
- Tavori, Iddo. "Haenergia shel Hashhina: Ha'mifgash Bein Ha'idan Ha'hadash Le'madaei Ha'hevra [The Divine Spirit's Energy: The Encounter between the New Age and Social Sciences]." Ed. Iddo Tavori. *Rokdim Bi'sede Kotzim: Ha'idan Ha'hadash Be'israel [Dancing in a Thorn Field: The New Age in Israel]*. Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hamehuhad, 2007. 7–27. [in Hebrew]
- Zaidman, Nurit. "New Age Products in Local and Global Contexts: Comparison between Israel and New Zealand." *Culture and Religion* 8 (2007): 249–61.
- . "The New Age Shop: Church or Marketplace." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22 (2007): 361–74.
- , Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, and Iris Nehemia. "From Temples to Organizations: The Introduction and Packaging of Spirituality." *Organization* 16 (2009): 597–621.
- Zhang, Yong, and Betsy Gelb. "Matching Advertising Appeals to Cultures: The Influence of Product Use Conditions." *Journal of Advertising* 25 (1996): 29–46.