

Marketing messages return to the basics

By Stuart Elliott, New York Times

Simply put, a lot of what Madison Avenue says these days is simply put.

“Simply,” “simple” and “simplicity” – along with like-minded thoughts that include “easy,” “honest” and “clear” – have become marketing buzzwords in response to three related trends: how busy life today seems, the growing complexity of technology and the increasingly complicated economic picture. That has encouraged advertisers to woo consumers with promises to provide solutions that are meant as simple but not simplistic.

“We all have this desire to simplify our lives, but we don’t know how to do it,” said Marian Salzman, the longtime trend tracker and chief executive of Euro RSCG Worldwide Public Relations, North America, who described herself during an interview as “talking on one BlackBerry” with her second BlackBerry “in my hand, with my coffee.”

Envy is also driving the simplicity movement, Ms. Salzman said, listing examples: “We have envy of other people who seem to have it together. We envy the time we had just three TV channels to choose from. And we envy the man in the gray flannel suit who knew when work started and ended.”

Simplicity marketing is, well, simple to find. Radio commercials for McDonald’s offer paeans to “the simple joy of a wholesome breakfast.” Ads call Ban antiperspirant “effortlessly simple,” while those for Ally Bank declare, “Saving is simple when no one charges you for it.”

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