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Selling Swedish summer: the marketing of Pommac, 1920–1960

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ABSTRACT
This paper offers the first case study of the Swedish soft drink Pommac, launched in 1919, and how the brand established itself as the ‘taste of summer’. Using multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine a large dataset of Pommac advertisements, it traces the brand’s development over its first forty years on the market (1920–1960), identifying the ways in which summer was depicted in advertisements, how this shifted over time in accordance with changes in Swedish society and how this worked in tandem with other secondary themes, such as luxury, sophistication and alcohol substitution. It finds that the concept of summer that Pommac initially promoted was highly idealised and oriented towards a middle-class public. In the 1940s, Pommac began to include working-class audiences in its advertisements for the first time, thereby creating a segmented market for the drink based around each group’s supposed tastes, cultures and forms of socialisation. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates how leisure has long been exploited by brands to engage with specific target audiences and enhances our understanding of class-based approaches to lifestyle marketing, while also showcasing some uniquely Swedish marketing characteristics that emerged in response to particular social, cultural and political developments in the country.

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KEYWORDS
Advertisements; Sweden; Pommac; summer; class-based marketing; soft drinks

Introduction
The rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the late nineteenth century led to the formation of a new middle class, which was influenced by emerging ideals around health, leisure and family life and attracted to fashionable, rather than necessary, goods. Across all types of products and services, canny marketers swiftly identified the new middle class as a target group and saw lifestyle marketing as a way of appealing to them. Tapping into the growing consumer culture and aesthetisication of everyday lives, companies and brands aligned themselves with the particular values, interests and desires of the new middle class, whether health and fitness, beauty, modernity, luxury or recreational pursuits, such as gardening, music and writing. As the
middle class began to travel more and enjoy seaside holidays as a result of increased free
time and disposable income, both summer and sunshine also became core lifestyle mar-
teting themes.

Perhaps to be expected, summer evolved into a regular feature of railway posters,
designed to encourage tourism to certain towns. It was also the focus of sunscreen
advertisements, which depicted young women in swimsuits sunbathing on the
beach. The theme also carried over into food and drink products, which played
upon the positive associations between sunshine, health and happiness. Sun Maid
raisins, for example, emphasised that they were ‘stored-up sunshine’, while Sunkist
orange juice showed Italianate scenes of orange trees in mountainous villages with
white-washed houses. Even advertisements for Lucky Strike cigarettes regularly
included images of men and women smoking on the beach under the strapline ‘Sunshine
mellows. Heat purifies’. The inclusion of sunshine and summer could also have a more
scientific edge, particularly upon the discovery of vitamin D. Both radioactive water and
cod liver oil brands described themselves as ‘sunshine in a bottle’, the former including
images of sunrays penetrating the body to indicate how radium acted internally. Still
today, sunshine and summer remain major selling points for many food and drink
brands, from Juicy Fruits chewing gum (‘a packet full of sunshine’) and Corona beer
(‘sunshine anytime’) to Tropicana orange juice (‘sip your sunshine’) and Lipton ice
tea (‘sunshine makes it taste better’). For over one hundred years, one brand that
has particularly excelled in associating itself with summer is Pommac.

First produced in 1919 by AB Fructus Fabriker, Pommac is a Swedish carbonated soft
drink made of fruits and berries. Following its launch, it quickly built a marketing cam-
paign that capitalised upon the Swedish anticipation of summer following the country’s
long, dark and cold winters, with advertisements showing images of happy people enjoy-
ing sunshine, beaches and picnics. Over the course of the next forty years, Pommac firmly
established itself not only as one of Sweden’s bestselling drinks, but also as ‘the taste of
summer’. However, the idea of summer that Pommac promoted was highly idealised
and oriented largely towards a middle-class public, failing to reflect the experiences of
most of the Swedish population during this period. In the 1940s, Pommac began to
include working-class audiences in its advertisements for the first time in response to
the introduction of the Swedish Annual Leave Act, thereby creating a segmented
market for its product based around each group’s supposed tastes, cultures and forms
of socialisation. This remained in place until the 1970s when, losing popularity, the
brand decided to launch a ‘back to basics’ campaign full of 1920s nostalgia and a
return to the middle-class format. Today, although Pommac is sold in larger PET
bottles at a price similar to other soft drinks, it still carries wider associations with a
middle-class lifestyle.

This paper seeks to offer the first case study of Pommac and how its advertisements
drew upon a particular aspect of lifestyle marketing, promoting the drink as an essential
part of the Swedish summer. It traces Pommac’s development over its first forty years on
the market (1920–1960), identifying the ways in which summer was depicted in adver-
tisements, how this shifted over time in accordance with changes in Swedish society
and how this worked in tandem with other secondary themes, such as luxury, sophisti-
cation and alcohol substitution, which capitalised upon middle-class anxieties of the era.
The study’s data consists of 300 Pommac advertisements, collected from the digital
archives of Svenska Dagbladet (one of Sweden’s bestselling newspapers), the Historisk Bildbyrå (historical advertising posters archive) and Litografiska Museet (Museum of Lithography). As advertisements use a combination of language and images, the study adopts a social semiotic approach to their understanding, drawing specifically on the tools of multimodal critical discourse analysis – a methodology that aims to uncover how meaning is created and conveyed in texts through linguistic, semiotic and compositional choices.20

Lifestyle marketing is still often framed as a ‘big bang’ moment that occurred in the 1980s when consumers began to display their individuality through products and goods.21 This belief has been widely reappraised in recent years by both historians and media and communication scholars who have placed the phenomenon within a much broader history of patterned practices and uses.22 The current study, thus, adds to this growing revisionist body of work on lifestyle marketing, but offers a new perspective by focusing on summer and a non-Anglo context. In doing so, it highlights the uniqueness of Pommac’s marketing campaign, considering that other drinks brands of the period predominantly focused on health benefits grounded in science (e.g. Coca Cola,23 Virol,24 Sanatogen,25 Miradium,26 Postum,27 chicha28) and, to a much lesser extent, nostalgia (e.g. Taroena29) and celebrity endorsements (e.g. Vin Mariani30). Despite the enormous popularity of Pommac in Sweden, no previous studies have been carried out on the drink. Accounts of the product are restricted to anecdotal blog posts, the only exceptions being Ahlborn and Nilmander31 and Blom32 who mention Pommac briefly in their work on the history of Swedish soft drinks. This paper, therefore, also provides an opportunity to uncover new findings on Pommac and how its early advertisements helped not only to consolidate concepts of the Swedish summer, but also to grant the drink a firm place within national perceptions of summer.

Overall, through its application of multimodal critical discourse analysis, this study uncovers the way that language, image, typography, colour, layout and composition work together in Pommac advertisements to connect the drink with summer and meet the demands of a new middle-class market and, later, a working-class market. On a general level, obtaining a greater appreciation of the historical development of lifestyle marketing demonstrates how leisure has long been exploited by brands to engage with specific target audiences and enhances our understanding of class-based approaches to lifestyle marketing, while on a specific level, it showcases some uniquely Swedish characteristics of lifestyle marketing in terms of both soft drinks and food marketing as a whole, thereby challenging seemingly innovative (and dominant) Anglo perspectives on the topic.

The origins of the soft drinks industry

Drinking has always entailed more than simply quenching one’s thirst. Drinks can offer comfort, be sources of indulgence, form part of rituals and contribute to social activities and festivities.33 Drinks also have a long association with health, with specific varieties promoted for their therapeutic benefits.34 This relationship between drinking and health can be traced to the revival of medicinal bathing across Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where, on the advice of Enlightened physicians, visitors began to drink the medicinal water.35 As spas increased in popularity, a lucrative opportunity
arose in ‘taking the spa experience home’ for consumers in the form of bottled water. Many scientists – from Robert Boyle and Stephen Hales to Henry Cavendish and William Brownrigg – attempted to imitate the naturally effervescent waters of famous springs, but it was Joseph Priestley who was most successful when he experimented on gas obtained from the fermenting vats of a brewery. In 1772, Priestley presented a small carbonating apparatus to the College of Physicians in London and suggested that, by means of a water pump, it could be highly impregnated with fixed air.

Following Priestley’s presentation, Thomas Henry, an apothecary in Manchester, used an apparatus based on the design to produce 12-gallon barrels of carbonated water. However, it was Swiss jeweller Jacob Schweppe who developed the first practical process to manufacture carbonated water, based on Priestley’s device. In 1783, he founded the Schweppes Company, selling bottled carbonated water to the people of Geneva. His endeavour was an immediate triumph, leading him to move to London in 1792 to develop the business further. Schweppes carbonated water was endorsed by leading doctors and marketed as a treatment for a variety of ailments, such as gout, indigestion and exhaustion, framing it firmly as a medicinal product. The Schweppes Company continued to innovate and, in 1835, it introduced Schweppes Lemonade, followed by Malvern Water in 1843 and Indian Water and Ginger Ale in the 1870s. Central to all of these products was an emphasis on health.

Throughout the nineteenth century, there were also attempts to replicate the salt mixtures found in naturally occurring mineral waters using off-the-shelf ingredients. By blending carbonates and tartrates with citric acid, a new product was created: fruit salts. While the market became flooded with fruit salts products, Eno’s Fruit Salts – produced by British pharmacist James Crossley Eno – was the most well-known brand. Eno’s was initially marketed as a cure for dyspepsia, but it slowly developed into a cure-all drink for such conditions as rheumatism, colds, fevers, headaches, constipation and biliousness.

As fruit salts and carbonated water were being widely consumed in Europe, another revolution in soft drinks was taking place across the Atlantic in the United States. In 1885, pharmacist Charles C. Alderton of Waco, Texas developed Dr Pepper – a drink made up of twenty-three flavours – which he marketed as an aid for digestion and fatigue. Just one year later, Atlanta pharmacist John S. Pemberton created Coca Cola – comprising cocaine from the coca leaf and caffeine-rich extracts of the kola nut – which he promoted as a tonic for most common health conditions. Although cocaine was removed from Coca Cola in 1903, it continued to be sold as a therapeutic drink until at least the 1930s.

Shortly following the arrival of Coca Cola on the market, another soft drink emerged in New Bern, North Carolina. Pharmacist Caleb Bradham operated a soda fountain in his store, his bestselling concoction being a mixture of sugar, water, caramel, lemon oil, kola nuts and nutmeg, which he called ‘Brad’s Drink’. As word of ‘Brad’s Drink’ spread, Bradham decided to give it a snappier name, opting for ‘Pepsi-Cola’ because he believed that the drink was a healthy cola that eased dyspepsia. In 1902, he formed the Pepsi-Cola Company, selling the product under the slogan ‘Exhilarating. Invigorating. Aids digestion.’ Over the course of the early twentieth century, the brand moved away from science and turned instead to the power of celebrity, employing famous spokespeople, such as racing car driver Barney Oldfield, to promote the drink.
A brief history of soft drinks in Sweden

In Sweden, similar research into carbonation took place around the time of Jacob Schweppes’ own experiments. In 1771, Professor Torben Bergman artificially produced carbonated water from chalk by the use of sulphuric acid, which led chemist Jöns Jacob Berzelius to start adding various spice extracts, juices and wine to make flavoured carbonated water. Around the same time, Professor Anders Sparrmann introduced carbonated sugar drinks to the Navy to protect against scurvy. However, it was not until 1835 that the first soft drinks were sold in Sweden by pharmacist Fredrick Kjernander who opened premises in Stockholm where visitors could buy mineral water and then add berries, fruits and lemonade essences. By the mid-nineteenth century, this idea had been latched onto by the country’s breweries who started to manufacture fermented sugar water, seasoned with ginger, hops and berries. In 1863, the Kungsholmens Sugar Drinks Factory was established, thus becoming the first major producer of soft drinks in Sweden.

By the end of the nineteenth century, leading pharmacy Apoteket Nordstjernan, which had long been involved with the production of mineral water, set up its own subsidiary selling soft drinks. Apoteket Nordstjernan widely promoted their soft drinks through mobile kiosks, retailer discounts, pavement signs and even door knockers. The first variety they produced was Citron-Brus (lemon), before swiftly adding more varieties to their product list, including apple, raspberry, champagne, banana, vanilla and mead.

As the popularity of soft drinks increased, Apoteket Nordstjernan began to face stiff competition from other Swedish companies. In 1905, Pomrilbolaget was established, which launched a Swiss apple soda called Pomril. Three years later, Apotekarnes Mineralvatten, who had previously viewed soft drinks as being a passing trend, entered the market. Over the next decade, Apotekarnes Mineralvatten became so successful that it took over both Apoteket Nordstjernan and Pomrilbolaget, absorbing their brands.

While the above companies produced soft drink mixes, the early twentieth century saw the launch of essence manufacturers who created tasteful aromas and extracts, which they then sold to breweries to create branded drinks. Sweden quickly became dominated by two manufacturers: AB Roberts and AB Fructus. AB Roberts was founded in Örebro in 1910 by Robert Roberts and his son Harry. Robert had sent Harry to Germany to study chemistry and it was here that Harry created a collection of recipes. On returning to Sweden, father and son set about experimenting with the recipes, leading to the release of two new soft drinks that are still sold today: Champis (made of apple and grapes) and Julmust (a Christmas root beer). AB Fructus, on the other hand, was responsible for the creation and manufacture of the carbonated fruit juice Pommac – the focus of this paper.

Unlike Schweppes, Dr Pepper, Coca Cola and Pepsi-Cola, the Swedish soft drinks were never marketed as medicinal or therapeutic. Instead, from the beginning, marketing campaigns emphasised fun and centred around parties, celebrations and special occasions, which situated the soft drinks as an important aspect of leisure time. One possible reason for this may be the growing temperance movement of the period that emphasised alternatives to alcohol. Sweden was split almost 50–50 in terms of views on prohibition and, therefore, offered a lucrative market of which new soft drink brands could take advantage. This suggests, then, that the Swedish soft drinks market was unique in its emphasis on lifestyle marketing from its very
beginning, epitomised by Pommac who appealed to middle-class ideals of summer in their advertisements.

**Enter Pommac, the ‘taste of summer’**

Pommac was created in 1919 by manufacturer Anders Lindahl. Lindahl came from a poor family whose fortunes were transformed when he developed the liquid cosmetic Lazarol and the skin ointment Lazarin in the kitchen of his home in Sundbyberg in 1900. The products were sold by mail order and the business quickly flourished, enabling Lindahl to open his first factory – Tekniska Fabriken Helios – in 1902. Lindahl was far ahead of his peers in terms of marketing, being the first to put billboards in fields and meadows along major roads and paying the local farmers with bottles of Lazarol to say thank you. As a result, his products continued to grow in popularity, leading him to open further factories around Sweden over the next decade, including Kallebäcks Vattenfabrik in Gothenburg.

It was at this factory in Gothenburg that the laboratory director, Albert Vilhelm Nummelin, mixed different extracts with carbonated water and sent them to Stockholm for Lindahl to taste. After various attempts to perfect the drink, Nummelin stumbled across a winning combination of twenty-five fruits (the recipe remains secret to this day). Lindahl called the creation Pommac – ‘pomm’ from the French for ‘apple’ and ‘ac’ from ‘cognac’ as its fruits and berries were aged for three months in oak barrels for brandy. Seeing strong market potential for Pommac, Lindahl invested the money he had made from Lazarol and Lazarin into the essence company AB Fructus, which he opened in 1919 on Nybrogatan in Stockholm, just a stone’s throw away from Apotekarne’s own soft drink factory.

Pommac’s big breakthrough came in 1923 at the Gothenburg Exhibition. As part of its marketing campaign, AB Fructus constructed an oriental-inspired Pommac tower with a radius of 11 metres, encouraging visitors to stop by and pick up a free drink. The Pommac Tower was advertised extensively in the popular press, informing readers of its ‘charming location’ and emphasising that its interior and exterior were designed by the exhibition’s lead architect Arvid Bjerke. An advertisement following the first day of the exhibition (Figure 1) claimed that ‘thousands streamed in’ and their ‘great expectations’ were ‘not disappointed.’ Furthermore, even those who had been ‘sceptical’ before agreed that Pommac was ‘nature’s nicest drink’ and ‘nobody left the Pommac Tower unsatisfied.’ The advertisement also explains that Pommac was served in ‘big, elegant champagne glasses’ by ‘Pommac girls’ in a setting where ‘works of art’ can be admired on the walls. Visitors also had an opportunity to see how Pommac is made with ‘modern machinery.’ From the advertisement, it is clear that Pommac was keen to associate itself with modernity, technology and middle-class aspirations from the very beginning. Its sense of grandeur and exclusivity was also emphasised by the accompanying image of the Pommac Tower, which is overexaggerated in size and overshadows the other buildings around it, and features hordes of people queuing outside. Over the course of the Exhibition, half a million people visited the Pommac Tower to taste the soft drink, soundly embedding the product in the minds of the Swedish population.

Keen to keep this momentum going following the exhibition, Lindahl embarked on major advertising campaigns, drawing on his previous knowledge gained with Lazarol
Advertisements for Pommac appeared regularly in the popular press, as well as on billboards, particularly in the Stockholm archipelago area, promoting the drink as an alternative to alcohol. At the heart of these advertisements was an idealised image of summer.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the 300 advertisements consulted for this study by theme, years, quantity, language and imagery. In what follows, a selection of prototypical advertisements representative of these overarching themes/content will be analysed.

**Figure 1.** Advertisement for Pommac Tower at the 1923 Gothenburg Exhibition *Svenska Dagbladet*, 22nd July 1923, p. 7.
chronologically. Their use of language and semiotics, as well as the arguments made, are reflective of the marketing strategies that frequently reoccur across the collected advertisements and are supported by supplementary evidence from the broader dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the Connection</td>
<td>1920–1924</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>- Heavily textual advertisements</td>
<td>- Young, beautiful women sipping glasses of Pommac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Headings that form connection between Pommac and Midsummer</td>
<td>- Quasi-voyeristic views</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Rhetorical questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Imperatives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Mimic format of informational article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Framed as a champagne substitute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exoticising the Swedish Summer</td>
<td>1924–1928</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>- Prestige markers, such as ‘noble’ and ‘wealth’</td>
<td>- Stereotypical Mediterranean woman in traditional dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Romanticised storytelling of food production and manufacture</td>
<td>- Peasants collecting and crushing fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Emphasis on sunshine, nature and ‘back-to-basics’ approach</td>
<td>- Arid landscapes and volcanic activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Baskets of fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Birth of the Middle-Class Summer</td>
<td>1928–1938</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>- Triadic structures that link sunshine and summer with Pommac</td>
<td>- Slice-of-life scenes of middle-class families swimming, sunbathing, boating, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Some pseudoscientific explanations</td>
<td>- Oversized Pommac bottles used for comical effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Problematisation of leisure time (e.g. ‘don’t waste summer’)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use as a mixer, not just an alcohol substitute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arrival of the Working-Class Summer</td>
<td>1938–1950</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>- Collective pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’</td>
<td>- Working-class men and women in uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Words to build camaraderie – e.g. ‘team’, ‘group’</td>
<td>- Working-class sports (e.g. boxing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Focus on sobriety and legality</td>
<td>- Pommac drank from the bottle rather than a glass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Humour/slapstick scenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Segmented Summer</td>
<td>1950–1960</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>- Poetic language (middle-class)</td>
<td>- Designs by famous artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- References to nectar and gold</td>
<td>- Dreamlike views of summer (middle-class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘First a Pommac’ slogan consolidated</td>
<td>- Humorous views of summer (working-class), now at leisure rather than at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of yellow to signal sunshine/happiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1920–1924 ‘Pommac and midsummer belong together’: establishing the connection

Lindahl launched his first marketing campaign around Pommac in the summer of 1920, reprinting advertisements in national and local newspapers at least once a week from May to September, which quickly established the brand as a summer drink. This idea was consolidated by the advertisements themselves, which told readers ‘Don’t forget to
order some Pommac for Midsummer!’ or ‘Sunshine, Midsummer and Pommac!’ These types of headlines suggest a logical link between Pommac and summer, thereby associating the drink with good weather and framing it as a rational choice.\textsuperscript{57} Other advertisements built a sense of excitement and curiosity around the brand by featuring a simple question in their headline (e.g. ‘Thirsty?’) and then offering the answer below: ‘Drink Pommac!’ Like the previous examples, these types of advertisements leave little room for readers to manoeuvre, suggesting Pommac is the only viable option to quench one’s thirst.

Other soft drink brands of the period – both nationally and internationally – did not form such connections with summer, instead choosing to emphasise health benefits (e.g. Pepsi-Cola, Dr Pepper),\textsuperscript{58} or, in the case of Schweppes, employ artists to create art deco designs of beautiful women sipping the drink.\textsuperscript{59} While summer was mentioned in advertisements by other food brands, it was often in terms of what foods supposedly helped cool you down in hot weather\textsuperscript{60} or was opportunistically added to advertisements during heatwaves to sell more products.\textsuperscript{61} Pommac differs from these examples because, from the very start, its advertisements suggested an unspoken rule that the drink was part of summer, thereby assigning the brand sociocultural values that it did not really have.

Unlike more established soft drinks brands like Coca Cola or Pepsi-Cola, all of the early Pommac advertisements were textual in nature, which meant that readers could easily mistake them for factual content, especially as they were often placed next to informative articles. According to Thornton,\textsuperscript{62} this strategy fuses textual and paratextual information into one, thereby increasing the impact of an advertisement and its messages. A clear example of this is the advertisement in Figure 2(a), which promotes Pommac and its sister drink Guldus. The advertisement follows a clear newspaper article format with its bold headings and heavily compressed text, making it harder to challenge the claims that Pommac is drank by ‘millions’ of people and has become ‘the most popular drink’ in Sweden. Credibility is built around the drink by featuring the name of ‘Dr Yngve Dalström’ alongside the title of ‘Controller.’ This reference harks back to the medicinal origins of soft drinks and imbues Pommac with a quasi-therapeutic quality, suggesting that it has curative properties, which is simply not true. The advertisement also offers an explanation of what Pommac is: ‘a champagne-type drink, light in colour and sparkly like champagne.’ Associating itself with champagne – a high-class drink typically kept for special occasions and celebrations – gives Pommac an air of luxury and sophistication, which is further emphasised by its portrayal as a ‘njutningsdryck’ (pleasure drink) that ‘has much better quality and taste than lemonade.’ Despite these convincing buzzwords and descriptions of its appearance, readers are none the wiser about Pommac’s actual ingredients or what it tastes like. Nonetheless, it sells an idea: that Pommac is fun and exciting and, therefore, essential for good times and good weather.\textsuperscript{63} This idea is also peddled in other advertisements from the same period, which describe Pommac as ‘Sweden’s national drink’ with a ‘sophisticated taste’ and ‘fresh and delicate bouquet,’ the latter vocabulary typically associated with wine or perfume, not soft drinks. Similar claims can be found in advertisements for other competing Swedish soft drinks, such as Champis and Pomril.\textsuperscript{64} This emphasis on soft drinks as an alcohol replacement across Swedish advertisements was strongly influenced by the 1922 prohibition referendum, which had divided the country.\textsuperscript{65} Although the proposal to
ban alcohol failed, there was still a large number of people in the country who were in favour of prohibition (49%). Therefore, Pommac and its competitors put themselves forward as alternative drinks that offered many of the same benefits as alcohol yet none of its negative consequences.

Following the aforementioned 1923 Gothenburg Exhibition and Pommac’s resounding success, Lindahl ramped up his marketing efforts and the number of Pommac advertisements in the popular press began to increase exponentially. They also became more multimodal in nature, employing images for the first time alongside text. One particular advertisement that ran frequently throughout the summer of 1924 can be seen in Figure 2 (b). It shows a large headshot of a young woman drinking a glass of Pommac. With her cropped wavy hair and bright lipstick, she resembles a 1920s Hollywood actress, while the sparkly liquid that she holds bears strong similarities to champagne, which is also accentuated by the fancy crystal in which it has been poured. All these elements combine to frame Pommac as both a drink of elegance and an alcohol substitute. The woman has a faint smile on her lips and her hazy gaze is directed down towards the glass,
encouraging the reader to adopt a quasi-voyeuristic view as they contemplate her in what Kress and van Leeuwen call an act of ‘offer’. The one-word caption ‘Lovely!’ in italics adds to this tantalisation and translates into a desire for Pommac, but could also be interpreted as a broader desire for the woman. The use of young, beautiful women in the style of Hollywood starlettes was a common feature of advertisements in this period, whether for foods, cosmetics or toiletries. In the case of soft drinks, they appear frequently in advertisements for both Coca Cola and Schweppes from the 1920s onwards. Reichert suggests that pairing sexually alluring women with soft drinks served to provide a subtle link between physiological reactions evoked by the image and the effect of the drink itself.

The main headline in the Pommac advertisement states that ‘Pommac and Midsummer belong together!’ ‘Belong’ is a rather strong choice of word, which clearly binds the two elements together and underlines their perfect fit. The accompanying body of text also emphasises the essentialness of Pommac at Midsummer, using colloquial and matter-of-fact language that is hard for readers to disagree with:

> You will, of course, be away somewhere for Midsummer and you’ll be sure to have fun. What is just as sure is that Pommac and Midsummer belong together. Can you think of a drink that is better than Pommac for such an occasion? – where dance and the heart’s delight are on the agenda and you long for something really nice and refreshing …

The advertisement goes on to claim that everyone who drinks Pommac ‘shouts together: charming, lovely, so good!’ before employing the imperative to demand that readers ‘Try it too! Drink Pommac at summer! Drink it always!’ In both cases, the triadic structure emphasises the message and provides rhythm, making it more likely for readers not just to remember Pommac, but to remember that summer is not the same without it. No other soft drinks brand – either nationally or internationally – so overtly evokes such a link with summer.

**1924–1928 exoticising the Swedish summer**

Now that Pommac had consolidated its position as a drink associated with the Swedish summer, its advertisements started to move towards broader aspiration goals. Specifically, they developed a focus on other countries where the weather was warm all year round in order to emphasise the mysterious twenty-five fruits that were harvested and used in the product. In doing so, they served to exoticise Pommac and, therefore, increase its perception as a drink for the well-cultured to be enjoyed in good weather. Although this exoticisation technique was not used by other soft drink brands of the period, it can be found in advertisements for Sunkist orange juice, which show Mediterranean villages to emphasise that the fruit is Valencian and harvested in the sunshine. Other brands, such as Möllers cod liver oil and Taroena food, also used similar techniques, but with the aim of ‘offering a fetishised, ahistorical representation of nature-made food’ that suggested a traditional way of life far removed from modern technology.

A recurring figure throughout these types of Pommac advertisements was a stereotypical Mediterranean woman, with olive skin and long black hair, carrying a large basket of fruit on her back and often dressed in a traditional Egyptian bedlah. She bears some resemblance to the Sun Maid Raisin girl, who had been introduced to Sweden just the
year before and was, therefore, fresh in the public consciousness. According to Armand, the Sun Maid Raisin girl intermingled the Modern Girl’s sex appeal with childish ingenuity and the hardworking nature of a female peasant, thereby framing the product as a luxury good. These connotations are carried over into Pommac, enabling the brand to relate itself to such qualities and sell this desired lifestyle to consumers.

Figure 3(a) is a characteristic example of this advertisement. Its headline – ‘Noblest Fruits’ – immediately links Pommac to high social status and exclusivity, suggesting that those who buy the drink have a considerable advantage over others. This prestige marker was frequently used across Swedish advertisements of the period, from cod liver oil to margarine, to single out those who used a certain product as part of a select group. The strapline explains that the fruits come from ‘south and north’, yet the advertisement clearly only offers a romanticised southern view, which is more likely to capture the attention of Swedish consumers unfamiliar with such settings. This romanticisation is taken further by the body of text which uses an engaging narrative to outline the process of creating Pommac.

We are told that ‘happy beautiful girls in warm lovely countries harvest the noble fruit, which ripens under a glowing and life-giving sun’ and that this fruit is then ‘collected in port cities where dark-skinned stewards sing and shout as they load the fruit onto steamers that bring it directly to Sweden.’ Here, the strong use of adjectives with positive semantic prosody, coupled with action verbs, serve to evoke a utopian scene that resembles a familiar place in everyday reality, yet is outside of time and only exists in

![Figure 3](https://example.com/figure3.png)

**Figure 3.** 1924–1928: Exoticising the Swedish Summer. (a) Noblest Fruits *(Svenska Dagbladet, 28th May 1924, p. 11)*; (b) From a Foreign Land *(Svenska Dagbladet, 15th May 1924, p. 11).*
the imagination. Similar descriptions can be found in promotional pamphlets of the period, which provide sentimentalised accounts of food production and manufacture. This emphasis on nature is then contrasted with the setting of Fructus factories and laboratories where the twenty-five fruits are ‘extracted and concentrated in ingenious machines’ to create Pommac. Framed in this way, Pommac is seen as a collaboration between multiple countries and is dependent on sunshine. Sun being integral to its development, thus, further intensifies its links with summer, even though this is not overtly stated in the advertisement. Rather, summer is implied through advice to drink Pommac chilled and that ‘nature itself’ created Pommac for ‘your pleasure and happiness,’ as well as the fact that the advertisement ran almost every day between May and September. Claiming that a food or drink was created by nature, even though it was manufactured, was a common feature of early twentieth-century marketing in Sweden, which served to link the product to goodness and health; it can be found in advertisements for radioactive water, cod liver oil and the mysterious health food Biomin.

Other advertisements of the period show an interesting contrast with the female figure, instead depicting peasants collecting fruit in baskets, tipping it into a circular stone vat and twisting a large wooden pole to crush it and extract the juice into amphorae. This scene takes place in an exotic setting assumed to be Southern Italy (possibly Naples or Sicily), given the arid landscape and volcanic activity in the background, as seen in Figure 3(b). This image simplifies the complex scientific process of extracting juice from fruit that takes place in the Fructus factories and instead advocates a back-to-basics approach in harmony with nature. While this depiction strongly contradicts the previous advertisement, it serves a similar purpose of presenting a utopian image of Pommac that is heavily connected to sunshine, nature and the great outdoors. Again, similar strategies can be found in advertisements of the period for cod liver oil and taro.

The headline proclaims, ‘From a distant land with an abundance of sun and warmth,’ while the accompanying text states, ‘Where berries and fruits have a luxuriance and bouquet wealth that we can only dream of.’ Again, Pommac is suggesting that it is able to offer something exclusive to Swedes through its drink, a window onto another culture and way of life, albeit highly romanticised, that they would be unable to access otherwise. This theme also reoccurs across other Pommac advertisements, which show large baskets of fruit placed amongst the Pyramids with the straplines ‘Where the sun shines all year round’ or ‘How noble fruits develop into noble drinks’, thereby tying the drink to a distant and exotic culture. Although there is no clear logic between the title and image, viewers are to assume some sort of connection and interpret Pommac as a high-class, exclusive drink associated with the summer.

1928–1938: the birth of the middle-class summer

While Pommac had always implied that its drink was for the middle class, given its focus on exclusivity and superiority to other drinks on the market, early advertisements did not overtly target these consumers. This changed in the late 1920s when Pommac recognised a lucrative opportunity in making this group the centre of their new marketing campaign and started to depict a quintessential middle-class summer in their advertisements. These advertisements relied heavily on image rather than text, showing a range of summer activities, such as swimming, sunbathing, boating, camping, cycling, picnicking,
playing tennis, walking in the park and dining on terraces. The figures in these images were often smiling nuclear families, made up of a mother, father and two children (usually a boy and a girl). This emphasis on family became further consolidated following the election win of the Social Democratic Party in 1932, which marked the beginning of forty-four years of near-uninterrupted rule. The Social Democrats emphasised a stable and happy family life as essential to the safeguarding of Sweden’s future and these were traits that advertisers were keen to capitalise upon to sell products,\textsuperscript{80} in the case of Pommac through idealised images of summer. This is a theme that runs across Swedish advertisements from the period, with Stomatol toothpaste and Möllers cod liver oil all turning the act of consumption into a family endeavour.\textsuperscript{81}

A case in point is Figure 4(a), which shows a large image of a mother, father and daughter on a motorboat raising a toast with a glass of Pommac. Although the first motorboat was registered in 1900 at the Royal Swedish Yacht Club, it was not until the late 1920s that its uptake grew considerably amongst the middle class after Erik Jonson mapped routes around the Stockholm archipelago, thereby marking a boost in recreational boating.\textsuperscript{82} The family in this advertisement being one of the few to own a boat are, therefore, at the forefront of modernity and innovation. Their middle-class status is also marked by their style of clothing, as well as the traditional summerhouse in the background. The three figures are all looking at one another, seemingly oblivious to the viewers’ gaze, which encourages us to observe them and the values that they – and thus Pommac – stand for: happiness, frivolity and pleasure.\textsuperscript{83} These feelings are accentuated by the heading ‘Enjoy to the fullest!’ as well as the short piece of text that

\textbf{Figure 4.} 1928–1938: The Birth of the Middle-Class Summer. (a) Enjoy to the Fullest! (\textit{Svenska Dagbladet}, 26th May 1928, p. 28); (b) Sun, Swimming and Pommac (\textit{Svenska Dagbladet}, 20th July 1929, p. 28); (c) Keep Going! (\textit{Svenska Dagbladet}, 12th June 1933, p. 6).
encapsulates the joy of summer: ‘Sunshine and the smell of sea. Blue sky – white clouds. Speed over wide beautiful bays – well chilled, sparkling Pommac in your glass! That’s how life is enjoyed to the fullest!’ Both verbally and visually, Pommac is embedded into the scene, this repetition emphasising its place in summer and giving the activity of drinking Pommac equivalence to other more common summer activities like boating. The large ‘Drink Pommac’ heading at the bottom of the advertisements again reiterates the connection, consolidating the concept of Pommac and summer in the minds of consumers. These slice-of-life scenes were a common feature of advertisements from this period, used to show potential consumers how well a product fit into the needs of each family member. While other Swedish soft drink brands also emphasised family life, international brands, such as Coca Cola and Schweppes, tended to focus predominantly on adults, framing their drinks as ideal for soirées or high-class social events.

Figure 4(b) is another advertisement that depicts an idealised middle-class summer. However, unlike the previous example, it is one of fantasy rather than reality. The advertisement shows four young, beautiful women in bathing suits floating on an oversized bottle of Pommac and holding up full glasses. Oversized items were often used to comic effect in advertisements at the time, particularly toothpaste (e.g. Pebeco, Stomatol) where giant inflatable tubes appeared on carnival floats or were distributed around seaside resorts with holidayers encouraged to take photographs. This served to create excitement and provide a touch of playfulness and adventure to the product.

‘Sun, swimming – and Pommac’ states the headline in the Pommac advertisement, while the strapline adds ‘summers greatest delights – you should enjoy them all at the same time.’ Like with the earlier Midsummer advertisements, this triadic structure creates a sense of causality, suggesting that you cannot enjoy the sunshine or swimming without a glass of Pommac and that all three together define summer. The line in italics at the end of the advertisement states that Pommac ‘caresses and cools your throat – quenches your thirst in the nicest way.’ This somewhat suggestive language adds to the feeling of jocularity and pleasure deriving from the drink.

Another common theme of Pommac advertisements in this period is an emphasis on making the most of summer and not wasting the long days ahead. This was inspired by the Social Democrats’ problematisation of leisure time and their advice that the public avoid being idle and partake in outdoor leisure activities as much as possible. This type of advertisement seems to be unique to Sweden and can be found across other Swedish brands, including Samarín. We see this in Figure 4(c) whose headline encourages readers to ‘Keep going! Don’t laze around in the summer heat’, before offering a solution on how they can achieve this: ‘Keep in top shape – drink cooling, refreshing Pommac.’ The solution is also depicted in visual format with an accompanying image, taken from an aerial view, of an outdoor café and a group of people being served Pommac by a waiter. The text alongside uses the persuasive triadic structure to inform viewers that ‘when the sun beats down, when drowsiness creeps over you, when your throat feels dry, then you need a glass of sparkling Pommac.’ Here, we see Pommac’s supposed abilities move beyond quenching one’s thirst to ‘liven[ing] up and stimulat[ing], do[ing] good both spiritually and physically’ because of its ‘blood-purifying fruit acids that effectively counteract all fatigue and give new elasticity and vigour.’ This scientific jargon turns Pommac into a magical elixir that is the key to enjoying the summer and
is likely to sound convincing to consumers, even if they do not exactly understand what it means. Other similar advertisements claim that Pommac is ‘just as refreshing as a sweet summer breeze’ or encourage consumers to try mixing it with Cognac to make ‘Pomjac’ or gin to make ‘Pomgin’, which is a ‘real pleasure’ guaranteed to ‘stimulate’ and ‘refresh.’ This new emphasis on Pommac as a mixer rather than as an alcohol substitute is reflective of softening public attitudes towards alcohol at the time, as well as the reduced power of temperance organisations.

1938–1950 the arrival of the working-class summer

Towards the end of the 1930s, the number of Pommac advertisements began to decrease. After almost thirty years on the market, the brand was now one of Sweden’s most popular drinks and did not need to rely so heavily on marketing. Nonetheless, of the advertisements that continued to be produced in this period, there was a marked change in their content as a result of a major development that took place in Swedish society in 1938: the introduction of the Swedish Annual Leave Act. This Act granted all employees twelve days of paid leave per year and served to equal out the previous class dimension of summer. National newspapers suddenly became flooded with advertisements focused on holidays, whether for clothing, cars, cameras, food or even banks. Having firmly established its middle-class market, Pommac now clearly saw potential in this new audience of working-class consumers and started to shift their focus towards them in their marketing campaigns. They recruited composer Jules Sylvain to write a ‘summer waltz’ with lyrics about Pommac, which was subsequently sung by Gösta Johnson on his folkpark tour – public recreation spaces typically enjoyed by the working class. They also began to include working-class figures in their print advertisements, as well as typically working-class sports, such as football and boxing. However, while previous middle-class advertisements had presented an idealised summer holiday, the majority of these new working-class advertisements instead portrayed workers in their uniforms rather than relaxing and having fun in the sun. Another noticeable difference in these working-class advertisements is Pommac being offered or drunk directly from the bottle, which signalled the fact that it was to be consumed on the go. This is in stark contrast to earlier middle-class advertisements, which always depicted Pommac being tipped into a fancy glass. Although this class divide is not apparent in other national or international soft drink advertisements, it can be found in advertisements for other Swedish products, particularly margarine, where the middle class is often depicted eating sandwiches leisurely at parties in contrast to the working class who consume them quickly as a momentary pause from work.

A clear example of the working-class figure in Pommac advertisements is Figure 5(a), which was a part of a series that ran throughout the summer of 1939 and featured a range of workers, including soldiers, waitresses and chauffeurs. The image shows a man in the uniform of the Swedish State Railway, mopping his face with a towel. The headline – taken to be the man speaking – asks ‘Who said a cold Pommac’, while the accompanying text outlines how Pommac is the drink ‘for we who get both thirsty and hot, for we who want to drink something good.’ The use of the collective pronoun ‘we’ builds a sense of camaraderie and singles out male train drivers as one distinct group that all have the
same goal: to drink Pommac. Given the reason why Pommac started producing these types of advertisements (i.e. the introduction of the Annual Leave Act), the decision to depict the man in his working, rather than leisure, clothes is significant. It suggests that Sweden still depends on labour throughout the summer to keep the country running efficiently and any relief from work will be fleeting. Nonetheless, in those brief moments of rest, Pommac will be there to quench one’s thirst. The fact that he is a train driver also carries a certain irony, given that he would have been transporting many middle-class people to holiday destinations as part of his job role. Also interesting is the fact that the advertisement did not feature in Svenska Dagbladet (which had a typical middle-class readership), instead appearing as posters or in more general magazines like Vårt Hem and Vecko Journalen.

Another advertisement, seen in Figure 5(b), depicts a signwriter whose grubby overalls, cap, portly figure and tanned skin identify him as a member of the working class. He is painting an advertisement on the side of a building, but stops halfway through to take a swig of Pommac from a bottle. Lost in the moment with his head back and eyes closed, he forgets about the paintbrush in his hand and, consequently, drips bright red paint down the scaffolding and onto the bike below. The advertisement that he is painting is for Pommac, thereby embedding the product into the scene in a humorous manner.97 This sense of humour is accentuated by the strapline ‘First a Pommac,’ which implies that consuming the drink goes above all else, including work. The introduction of slapstick humour into Pommac advertisements lowers their tone somewhat, signalling a shift towards entertainment for the masses rather than simple information delivery for the middle class.98

Figure 5. 1938–1950: The Arrival of the Working-Class Summer. (a) Vem sa’ en kall Pommac, Veckojournalen, June 1939; (b) First a Pommac (Historisk Bildbyrås Samling, 1950).
1950–1960: the segmented summer

Now that Pommac had started to win over working-class consumers, its marketing campaign shifted once again in the 1950s in a bid to retain its previous middle-class market and hold onto its new working-class one. It did so by introducing segmented marketing with innovative advertisements that catered to each group’s supposed tastes, cultures and forms of socialisation. While the middle-class advertisements were largely produced by established expressionist painters, such as Sven Erixon, Isaac Grünewald and Stellan Mörner, the working-class advertisements were created instead by British illustrator F. Whitby Cox, known for his humorous illustrations. Whitby Cox had started working with Pommac in the late 1940s (Figure 5(b) is one of his designs), but the other artists were new additions as Pommac made its shift towards a segmented market. Although Schweppes had used artists in the marketing of its soft drink since at least the 1920s (as had other brands, such as Pears soap and Cadbury’s99), Pommac appears unique in its employment of different artists to appeal to different class groups. This strategy was successful and became the established format of Pommac advertisements for the next decade. During this period, advertisements increasingly took the form of posters, meaning that they were often published in polychrome.

Unlike previous middle-class advertisements, many of the advertisements in this period conjured up an image of summer in the imagination rather than explicitly reflected what typical middle-class families did in the summer. We see this in Figure 6(a) (painted by Isaac Grünewald), where the expressionist blurred hues and thick lines evoke a dreamlike state that captures the emotions and feelings surrounding summer rather than summer itself. The distorted view shows two women in the foreground with glasses of Pommac, overlooking a busy beach. In this way, it bears a resemblance to what Kress and van Leeuwen100 describe as a ‘suggestive symbolic’ image, which serves to create a particular atmosphere.

Figure 6. 1950–1960: The Segmented Summer. (a) Isaac Grünewald poster (Lifografska Museet, 1954); (b) Happy Pommac Whitsun (Svenska Dagbladet, 31st May 1952, p. 10); (c) F. Whitby Cox (Lifografska Museet, 1951).
through the use of textures and colours. Here, they work to connote relaxation, leisure and happiness, all channelled through the consumption of Pommac. Thus, Pommac is selling an adventure to consumers, enabling them to travel in their minds to this imaginary paradise simply by taking a sip of the drink.

We also see the first use of colour in Pommac newspaper advertisements during this period and how it can be employed symbolically. Figure 6(b), for example, shows a large bottle of Pommac in bright yellow: a colour associated with sunshine, happiness and warmth. This colour features across advertisements of the period that want to emphasise sunshine and its connotations (e.g. Sunkist orange juice, NIVEA sunscreen, Sun Maid raisins, Lucky Strike cigarettes) and is still used today for the same purposes (e.g. Juicy Fruits chewing gum, Corona beer, Tropicana orange juice, Lipton ice tea). A large bunch of flowers in yellow and white appear alongside the bottle, overlapping to indicate a connection between the two elements. Also overlapping them is a sign stating ‘Happy Pommac Whitsun.’ Here, we see Pommac visually instructing consumers on how to mark Whitsun by showing a small image of a family eating outdoors next to the large bottle of Pommac, thereby unequivocally linking the two together. This connection is further emphasised by the catchy line ‘Pommac at Whitsun means a party at Whitsun,’ equating the drink with good times and celebrations. The following line ‘Tastes like nectar, glitters like gold’ also taps into the significance of the colour yellow, linking it to sophistication and finesse.

The advertisements aimed at the working class are significantly different in style, offering a sense of cheekiness and frivolity. Unlike earlier advertisements, the working class is depicted at leisure rather than work, typically on picnics or at zoos. We see this in such examples as an old man in a folk costume trying to erect the Midsummer pole, a young boy pushing his way towards a Pommac stand at a train station and a blindfolded husband tasting Pommac while his wife embraces another man behind his back. Weinberger et al. have found that most examples of humour in early twentieth-century advertisements centre around wordplay. However, it is clear that Pommac relied largely on the power of semiotics over language to create humour – much in the same way as Stomatol toothpaste and Läkerol lozenges did from as early as 1900 – which suggests that perhaps Swedish brands were at the forefront of humour in marketing. Other soft drinks brands continued with their tried-and-tested approaches during this period, featuring beautiful, young women and associating the drink with evening parties and social gatherings.

Figure 6(c) (designed by F. Whitby Cox) shows a clear example of this cheeky humour in its image of a group of young children riding on the back of an elephant. The elephant spots a kulla (woman in traditional Dalarna dress) selling Pommac from a basket and reaches for a bottle with its trunk, leading the zookeeper to pull it forward to continue the ride. Elephants were a major attraction at Skansen (Stockholm Zoo) in the 1950s, offering rides to visitors throughout the summer, while a trip to Skansen was the highlight of many working-class children’s holidays. Pommac draws on this knowledge and the familiar scene for humorous effect, capturing the mischievous looks on the young children’s faces at the chaos around them and the kulla’s lack of awareness. The now well-established slogan ‘First a Pommac’ adds to the humour, comically implying that the elephant refuses to work until he has had a drink.
1960s and beyond: back to basics

According to Blom, Pommac was starting to get a little ‘dusty’ by the 1960s. This was not helped by increased competition from foreign brands, such as Coca Cola, which had been introduced to Sweden the decade before. In response, Pommac decided to adopt a back-to-basics approach and return to its original marketing style. Advertisements from this period tend to contain just one short line of text, often linking Pommac to summer: ‘School’s out, time for Pommac,’ ‘It’s summer, sun or not, always Pommac’ and, as in Figure 7, ‘The special taste of summer is Pommac.’ The only image accompanying this text was the familiar triangular Pommac logo.

Things were made worse for Pommac in 1971 when the Market Practices Act was passed by the Riksdag, which banned the depiction of fruit on their labels because it was seen as false advertising. Pommac were obliged to come up with a new label and opted for a fancy French lily which aimed to convey tradition and romance. The new label was promoted through 1920s nostalgia, with flappers appearing in advertisements. When the Swedish law on banning advertisements from radio and

Figure 7. 1960s Onwards: Back to Basics The Special Taste of Summer is Pommac, Svenska Dagbladet, 25th August 1967, p. 15.
television was lifted in 1992, Pommac began to move away from newspapers and billboards and focus on these new platforms instead to market its drink. Throughout the 1990s, Pommac’s popularity continued to decline to such a point that in late 2004, Carlsberg (who had owned the brand since 1991) announced that they were going to cease production. This was met with outcry by the Swedish public and, after a petition with more than 50,000 signatures, Carlsberg decided to keep producing Pommac. This sparked a rebirth in interest in the drink and it remains widely beloved in Sweden today, particularly – as one might expect after 100 years of marketing – during the summertime, but it is now also consumed widely at Christmas and New Year. Despite its efforts to appeal to a broader audience and the fact that it is now produced in larger PET bottles at a competitive price, Pommac is still viewed in the public conscience as a predominantly middle-class product associated with exclusivity.

Concluding discussion: selling Swedish summer

When major soft drink brands, such as Coca Cola, Pepsi-Cola and Schweppes, emerged onto the market in the nineteenth century, advertisements centred around their health benefits, drawing upon their pharmaceutical origins and the historical link between carbonated water and physical wellbeing. This remained their strategy into the early twentieth century, gradually giving way to more lifestyle-orientated approaches in the 1920s that tended to depict finely dressed women at soirees and social events. The Swedish brand Pommac, however, tells a different story. From its initial launch in 1919, it employed lifestyle marketing, swiftly establishing itself as the ‘taste of summer’. Each year, it ran extensive marketing campaigns from May to September, which emphasised that Pommac was an integral part of summer. While summer is a theme that appears in historical advertisements for other food and drink brands, references are often in relation to the benefits of sunshine (either literally or metaphorically) or opportunistically capitalise upon heatwaves to add new claims about their ability to cool people down. Pommac’s use of summer, thus, stands out in the way that it was cultivated and developed over time in accordance with developments in Swedish society, mostly from a class-based perspective.

Pommac arose in a period when the question of prohibition was being hotly debated in Sweden. Therefore, offering itself as an alternative drink, particularly one to be enjoyed in the summer when rates of alcohol consumption increased, was a shrewd move. Its initial orientation towards the middle class was also calculated, given that this group was constantly searching for the latest trend and had the disposable income to purchase the drink, despite its relatively expensive price. This consolidated the idea very early on that Pommac was an exclusive and luxury product. However, in 1938, Pommac introduced working-class figures into its advertisements for the first time in a bid to expand its market. By the 1950s, a segmented market was in place, with targeted advertisements that appealed to each class group’s supposed tastes, cultures and forms of socialisation. To date, most work on the history of advertising in Sweden has been centred around gender and nationalism, with class being largely ignored due to the ‘national myth’ of Swedish
egalitarianism. This study’s class-based advertisements, therefore, make an important contribution to this growing body of research that is starting to contradict such narratives.

The application of multimodal critical discourse analysis to the collected advertisements also reveals several aspects of Pommac’s advertisements that were unique, not just in terms of the soft drink marketing but food marketing as a whole. We see, for example, how Pommac responded to political changes by shifting its advertisements towards family and the importance of family life following the rise to power of the Social Democrats, while other international soft drinks brand maintained an adult focus. Equally, Pommac reacted immediately to the Social Democrats’ problematisation of leisure time by advising consumers not to waste the summer or be lazy. Furthermore, the brand incorporated the working class into its target audience for the first time following the introduction of the Swedish Annual Leave Act 1938. Another novel aspect of Pommac advertisements is the use of humour, which is conveyed both linguistically through cheeky straplines and multimodally through oversized bottles and slapstick scenes. This predates the use of humour in other soft drink advertisements by several decades. Additionally, while other soft drink brands had employed artists before to design their advertisements, Pommac was innovative in its use of different artists to target advertisements at either working- or middle-class consumers. Finally, Pommac remained aware of shifts in the alcohol debate and adapted its marketing accordingly, moving from an alcohol replacement to a mixer as attitudes evolved over time. All of these aspects suggest that future studies should pay greater attention to the use of lifestyle marketing in non-Anglo contexts on a general level, and soft drink marketing in non-Anglo contexts on a specific level, in order to avoid a one-dimensional perspective that risks overstating the novelty of certain British or American marketing practices.

Although outside the scope of this paper, it is also worth briefly considering why Pommac’s uptake amongst the working classes was relatively short-lived. It could be that Pommac was simply ‘too late to the game’, having already been on the market for twenty years before it shifted towards a working-class focus and, therefore, was already solidified in the public’s mind as a middle-class product. Furthermore, its decision to maintain an expensive price and a small bottle, despite its increased working-class focus, may have also deterred some consumers who turned to cheaper alternatives instead like Pomril and Champis. Pommac’s decision to fall back on slapstick humour and stereotypical images of workers may have also been off-putting for some who deemed it offensive, while the brand’s sudden incorporation of the working class may have also been considered ingenuine and an example of Pommac’s desire to gain a broader share of the market.

Overall, this first ever case study of Pommac demonstrates the brand’s importance as an early example of lifestyle marketing and how powerful the concept can be when certain ideas (in this case, summer and class) are colonised, shaped and remarketed time and time again to remain competitive – a strategy that is still frequently used today. Through its continual refashioning of summer from 1920 to 1960 in response to social, cultural and political changes, Pommac was able to sell an experience, rather than a product, to consumers, thereby consolidating in their minds that Pommac and summer truly belonged together.
Notes

2. O’Hagan, “Flesh-Formers or Fads?”
7. Carnevali and Newton, “Pianos for the People.”
12. See, for example, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/474426141991400851/.
15. See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90Dt4QB12rs.
17. See, for example, https://www.thedrum.com/creative-works/project/david-miami-corona-sunshine-anytime.
18. See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7C0F0UMKKQ.
19. Sverige, “Pommac.”
30. Emery, “Viral Marketing.”
34. Ibid.
35. Eddy, “The Sparkling Nectar of Spas.”
37. A similar suggestion was also made by French chemist Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier one year later.
38. Coca Cola, “The History of Schweppes.”
39. Earlier version of lemonade can be traced to the Compagnie de Limonadiers in seventeenth-century Paris, where cups of water and lemon juice sweetened with honey were sold from tanks on the back of street vendors.

40. See, for example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fruit_salt#/media/File:Eno_s_Fruit_Salt_advertisement_001.jpg.

41. All information in this paragraph from Hymson, The Company that Taught the World to Sing.

42. Pepsi, “History of the Birthplace.”

43. Petersson and Davidsson, Kolsyrade Drycker och Oral Hälsa.

44. Ragnar, “Svenska drycker – ett kunskapsunderlag.”


46. Ibid.

47. Blom, “Läskens uppkomst.”

48. Ahlborn and Nilmander, Försvinnande god.


50. Ibid.

51. Roberts, “History.”

52. O’Hagan, “Alcohol Is Humanity’s Enemy!”

53. The information on Lindahl and Pommac in this section come largely from Elementet 8: Fructus. Värdefulla industrimiljöer i Stockholm.

54. Sundbybergs Stadsmuseum, “Fastigheten Arla Sturegatan och.”


58. See, for example, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/120330621285025030/ (Pepsi-Cola) or https://quotesgram.com/img/dr-pepper-quotes/7162389/ (Dr Pepper).


60. See, for example, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001112/19040728/160/0011 (Grape Nuts).

61. See Plasmon and Emprote advertisements in O’Hagan, “Flesh-Formers or Fads,” for example.


64. See, for example, https://gamlaskyltar.se/skylt/champis-6/ (Champis) and https://gamlaskyltar.se/skylt/pomril/ (Pomril).


66. Kress and van Leeuwen, Reading Images, 124.


68. Reichert, The Erotic History of Advertising.


70. See, for example, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/474426141991400851/.


75. See, for example, Postum (https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015071566023&view=1up&seq=7), Hershey (https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31822042770255&view=1up&seq=3&skin=2021) and Heinz (https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t3cz3w101&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021).

77. Ibid.


82. Sjöhistoriska, “The History of the Pleasure Boat.”

83. For their use in fruit and vegetable advertisements, see Nelson, Das and Ahn, “A Prescription for Health.”


85. Chen and Eriksson, “The Mythologization of Protein.”

86. Larsson, “Images of Leisure and Outdoor Activities in the 1930s”; O’Hagan, “From Fatigue Fighter to Heartburn Healer.”

87. Ibid.

88. Loeb, Consuming Angels.

89. Fricén, “Kvinnorna, spriten och socialpolitiken.”

90. Larsson, “Images of Leisure and Outdoor Activities in the 1930s.”

91. Grusell, “Reklamens bild av semester.”


94. Although train conductors were part of the Swedish civil service, the majority came from working-class backgrounds at this time (see Therborn, Klasstrukturen i Sverige 1930–1980).


98. See, for example, Bubbles by John Everett Millet for Pear’s Soap (https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/421227371390053879/) and Cadbury’s ‘famous artists’ chocolate box designs (https://www.flickr.com/photos/36844288@N00/4372826179).

99. Kress and van Leeuwen, Reading Images, 106.

100. Ibid., 182.


102. Ibid.

103. Weinberger, Gulas, and Weinberger, “Looking in through Outdoor.”


106. Elephant Database, “Stockholm Zoo (Skansen) in Sweden.”


109. Ibid.

110. Svenska Dagbladet, “Carlsberg ångrar sig om Pommac.”

111. Ibid.


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