

Genesis Fallas

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### Visual Analysis of Modern Day Advertising: Battle of the Sexes?

It seems as though in today's pop culture, men and women are always trying to "out-do" each other through means of competition. Women are attempting to gain equal rights to men while males do everything they can to show their dominance and prove themselves to be "manly" enough for society. Corporations seem to notice this ongoing trend. They try to take advantage by making advertisements towards each sex to make them feel better about themselves, sometimes even better than their opposites. The Dr. Pepper company is famous (and infamous) for using this tactic in their advertising. They do so by using comedic gestures or overly dramatic exaggerations to make one sex look better than the other. Dr. Pepper wants to make consumers feel like the superior sex by drinking their product. They want to make the consumer feel more empowered of themselves by showing independent individuals through their ads.

More often do some companies try to make ads geared towards one particular sex. Dr. Pepper did so by creating the character "Mountain Man", who appears very rugged, muscular, and quite hairy. In the ad that the company aired, it starts off with Mountain Man waking up in his campsite in what seems like a very deep part of a forest in the Rockies. The next frames then show him ripping off tree bark fresh off a tree and eating it, carrying an entire twenty two foot log across the forest while drinking Dr. Pepper 10. He does all of this while looking very content and happy with his way of life. The next scene shows him fishing with his bare hands and a

tremendously large smile, only to catch a soda in a chunk of ice. After some shots of a bald eagle flying with a can of soda in its talons, it then shows Mountain Man in a canoe with a wild bear and then him hiking with soda, once again. In big white letters, the next frame shows a can of Dr. Pepper 10 with the description saying “The Manliest Low-Calorie Soda in The History of Mankind.” Throughout the whole commercial, he appears to be very satisfied with his lifestyle.

Now of course, it was all over exaggerations and comedic value, but many of the stereotypes shown are examples of what society expects men to be— big muscles, bushy beards, and surviving off the land. Being able to survive the elements on your own and providing for yourself is a gender role that has been emphasized for men to follow, especially those with families. This ad highlights those gender roles and puts a comedic twist to it, reminding men of what society expects from them. Dr. Pepper didn’t do this purely to push away their female audience. The company conducted research to see why their diet soda wasn’t appealing to men. Their research shows that men tend to not consume Dr. Pepper Ten because it wasn’t seen as “manly” enough (Associated Press). This goes to show that this was definitely not purely to eschew women from their target audience. The Dr. Pepper Company needed a tactic to target more men to their diet soda. By creating Mountain Man and even changing their packaging for their product, it seemed ideal for them, but it only angered people, especially females, for a while. What some people might not notice though, is the fact that these type of commercials are becoming so much more common and even have counter ones.

Some soda companies, such as Dr. Pepper, make advertisements that make the consumer feel empowered and independent, especially of their sex. One excellent example of this is a slightly documentary style ad that follows the life of a fashion blogger named Leandra Medine. It

first starts out on her explaining how she runs a fashion blog specifically for fashion that women love and men hate. She does so while sitting at her laptop and drinking Dr. Pepper. She then goes on to explain how in college, she was depressed because she didn't have much of a good love life and her friend told her that she was a "man repeller", which then she used as an angle to start her blog. She then starts giving "man repeller" fashion tips such as "If it feels wrong, it's right," and "Comfort is a state of mind." She's trying to give advice on how to be independent, which is hypocritical in itself. The next few scenes then show her going to high class fashion pieces and walking around New York. She also talks about her huge fan base and how she gets messages from women that feel similar to her. The last part of the commercial then consists of her explaining how she's one in a million with a shirt that has the Dr. Pepper logo on it and in white print says "I'm a man repller," with the trademark company color.

In this ad, the situation and word choice showcase how independent Medine is as a woman. Throughout the whole commercial, there isn't a single other person that is within her frame. She's always the main point within the shot, along with a can of Dr. Pepper. This marketing tactic that the Dr. Pepper company uses emphasizes the idea that she doesn't need anyone by her side to be successful, especially a man. This tactic was also similar to the counter ad described earlier in this essay. Mountain Man was always alone, with the exception of the grizzly bear. With the ad showing how she's by herself and having so much success, it's basically telling the viewer "Hey, you don't need anyone by your side to be successful as long as you drink our product."

Getting back to the point, some of the diction that Medine uses also shows how independent she is; it's in a way that she doesn't care what anyone else thinks or says about her.

One of her “man repeller” tips was to know your “onion”, or layers. In a way, I feel like she’s trying to explain how knowing how comfortable you can be with however much clothing you wear can make you feel confident. One of her tips that stood out the most to me was that comfort is a state of mind. The way that this tip can be interpreted by women is that confidence is all in your head and your body. You can give off the feeling of confidence just by the state of mind that you’re in. However, she talks about being independent but gives advice on “how to be” fashionable and comfortable. She’s indirectly telling her audience how to dress and how to feel about themselves, rather than to think for themselves and do what they want. It’s one of the most hypocritical parts of this ad. When one wants to be independent, it shouldn’t be in a certain lifestyle. An independent individual should be able to find it themselves. One of the most significant points that I feel that this ad really sells to women is the fact that many women today now seek much more independence than in the past. It’s not a new modern idea, but it’s not that old either. By displaying her lifestyle while at the same time consuming Dr. Pepper, it’s showing the audience that if you drink the same soda as her, it’s possible to have the same lifestyle that she has as well. Of course, that’s not the exact message that the ad is showing, but it’s not that subliminal either. It is but the thousands of ways that the Dr. Pepper company tries to make people feel good about their gender.

Dr. Pepper develops and create advertisements that specifically make the consumer feel as though they are the superior sex by drinking their soda. They do this because they want their target audiences to feel more empowered about themselves. This is done by showing independent individuals feeling empowered about themselves in their advertisements. The main reason for this is so that the company can make certain genders feel good about themselves

because of what they display with their product, thus, selling their soda. It's a marketing tactic as old as the magazine trend, perhaps even older.

Works Cited

Associated Press. "Dr. Pepper goes macho to sell men diet drink." *CBS News*. CBS Interactive

Inc. 10 Oct. 2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2013.