

Deconstructing Babybel's “Mall Smarts” Commercial

Since when do only women enjoy cheese?

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The Business: The Laughing Cow

The Laughing Cow (TLC) is a brand from Fromageries Bel, a company hailing from France that parents the Bel Brands USA business. The Laughing Cow claims three pronounced products that are a sensation in the states: The Laughing Cow cheese wedges, Mini Babybel cheese, and The Laughing Cow Smooth Sensations Cream Cheese Spread. It is obvious that their product is cheese, all kinds of cheese that one would think brings happiness to all people. But their advertising says differently.

The product of [this](#) commercial is focused on their Mini Babybel cheese wrapped in red wax. I have chosen this advertisement to deconstruct because it is so obviously targeted towards women. Even though the product is cheese! A dairy product that can be consumed by any sex or age, but is being advertised to only thirty-something year old women. That makes absolutely no sense, I have the exact product sitting in my fridge because my *male* roommate bought it and enjoys the product regularly.

The mascot for the company is a quiet literally a “laughing cow;” that – upon further inspection—the website claims is a fun loving cow that wears earrings.

Now I am not trying to be sexist here, but the majority of which sex wears earrings? Women do, it's plain and simple, although the “earrings” are made out of another cheese product by TLC they are still interpreted as earrings and not “cow tags.” The slogan of TLC is “Have you laughed today?” Always said so perfectly by a woman; then which brings to my mind: What is the one trait that all women claim they want in a man? Humor,



they want their man to make them laugh. Now there is a product that they can eat that claims the ability of making the consumer – always a woman in the advertisement – laugh. Oddly enough, all of this realization comes from deconstructing just the mascot and slogan.

Cultural Studies

The target audience

Who would be the target audience for cheese? Men? Women? Teenagers? Children?

Personally I would believe all of the above. Who is the target audience of this Mini Babybel mall commercial though? Seems to me it is thirty-something year old women shopping at a mall, but they could also be twenty-something's as well. I'm not being an ageist here, although Babybel might be.

The entire thirty-second commercial has five main actors in it. Four of which are women; including the spokesperson for TLC. The one man in the commercial is not even asked for his opinion on the cheese, he is simply there to be flirted with, but I will present more on that later. The point is that in an entire mall the spokesperson only walked up to and spoke with twenty/thirty-something women about the cheese. Apparently assuming that no other age or opposite sex would enjoy a dairy product. But look – they are not racist because the second actor and first trial tester is African-American.

Now, about that only male in focus on screen, what is he dressed like? After taking a sample he continues to walk past our spokesperson, and is dressed extremely nice for a day at the mall. They exchange a type of mini-dialogue where after hearing her flirtatiously say “good things come in small packages” he glances back and smiles at her. What does this exchange mean? Eat Babybel and a well-dressed, perhaps successful man will look at you and want to buy a ruby? That must be some intense cheese. Also, the one jewel they use for this dialogue is a red

one; the same color as the packaging for Mini Babybel. That is some extreme subliminal messaging for cheese.

Why target women as the main audience though? Is it because it is a proven fact that women need more calcium in their diet? They are more likely to develop osteoporosis so we should target them in dairy advertisements? Or perhaps because women never knew how cute cheese could be? These are all very valid questions that the company may have asked while creating this advertisement for Babybel.

Textual Analysis

Words, actors, and display

The commercial even uses a few buzz words and phrases that would pull women towards their specific cheese product. The words “totally natural,” “freshness,” and especially “snack accessory” would all be appealing to women; while men may not care as much to hear those words while picking out cheese. Then again women are usually type casted to be the shoppers, which is something I touch on later when I cover the topic of where the commercial was shot at: the mall. Although a man might care about the words “natural” or “freshness” I can guarantee that a straight man will not care about the words “snack accessory.” By using that phrase they are trying to be witty or clever to a fast-paced, self-gratifying culture that may have ignored them otherwise, and also directly targets women.

What about the look of the women in the commercial? In general the actresses are lean, healthy looking, and fashionable; all of which are traits that matter to the typical woman. In today’s world if you are a woman over the age of fourteen you will, or most likely already have, counted calories. If viewers are seeing the spokesperson and other thin women eating the product they too will think this snack will keep them lean and healthy. After sampling this delightful

little dairy snack every woman smiles and the pair of friends are even found laughing, and what woman does not love to laugh and smile; it is possibly any woman's favorite thing to do.

Showing the women in this commercial doing just that insinuates that when you buy Babybel you too will smile, laugh, and be joyful. Somehow TLC has found a way to make consuming cheese all about happiness and laughter, which is exactly what the company could want.

They are even showing the idea of happiness via colorful display. In the second shot – first consumer reaction – we see a woman looking at two outrageously different kitchenware displays. The plain white dishes represented plain ordinary cheese, and the colorful bright dishes embodied Babybel cheese. Thus implying that if you want to be fun, outgoing, and interesting you would eat Babybel. Preluding to how every woman wants to be fun, outgoing, and interesting.

“Mall Smarts” – Why the mall makes the setting

A commercial for Mini Babybel could have been located anywhere – right? The product itself is a portable snack that can be eaten anywhere, at any reasonable time. Why film the commercial in a mall of all places? Well that seems to be easily answered by a simple equation: shopping plus appealing displays plus mall equals women. It is really simple right? This is a prime location to get the attention of women! It is a place they love to go and just walk around in; they go there to socialize with their friends, window shop, and store away creative ideas for later. So really, what better place to target women at than in their favorite place to actually spend money? This makes perfectly clear sense. Women enjoy shopping, they enjoy spending time at the mall, and if they enjoy those things, they will enjoy Babybel cheese; which they can eat at the mall! Oddly enough, the mall would probably be the one place a customer would not be able to

buy Babybel. But still they make the relation of spending money and buying the product in this subliminal way.

What is the ratio of men to women at a mall as well? In all honesty, there will probably be twice the amount of women than men in any mall. So that could possibly explain why the majority of actors in the commercial were women. Even looking at the background, the majority of people blurred out and walking around behind the main frame are women. All of the actors, extras, and placement scream that this product is for women.

Store windows

Aside from the spokesperson greeting and concluding the viewer in the mall court, we see her greeting the tasters in front of three stores. We see a kitchen display, a fashion display, and a jewelry store.

Kitchen display

The first taster – as I stated earlier – was approached in front of a kitchen display. So a woman is shopping for kitchenware, other women think: “Hey I shop for kitchenware!” And there we have it, the simple fact that women shop for kitchen supplies is reason enough to place their first consumer there. Also, I hate saying it, but there is that terribly firm belief that a woman’s place is in the kitchen, and the fact they are selling a food product does not help that situation.

Fashion display

Our pair of friends that sample Mini Babybel are in front of a fashion display and checking out scarfs. What do women love more than cooking and being in the kitchen? Being

fashionable and shopping in stylish stores. The commercial is so stereotypical it actually offends me as a woman. But I suppose that's what TLC thinks of its consumers: when we are not in the kitchen, we are spending money; most likely on fashion.

Jewelry store

The final store we see is a jewelry store; because that is the direction the single man in the entire commercial is walking towards. The commercial breaks reality and even claims "girls like rubies!"

So out of any three stores they could have picked to film in front of, they pick the three that women care about most. They targeted the hell out of women, so much so that this woman was actually insulted after watching the commercial.

Conclusion

So a cheese company for women?

I know that The Laughing Cow was most likely not trying to insult women, but in this single advertisement – to the trained, well-aware eye – the company thinks pretty lowly of its target consumers. They are saying their consumers like shopping, malls, kitchenware, fashions, jewelry, smiling, laughing, and men in business clothing. Two out eight are not terribly sexist, but to only have a quarter of your consumer interests not be sexist is a bad ratio as a company. The Laughing Cow is targeting one audience, but they do not need to. Their product is cheese, and everybody likes cheese, unless they have a lactose intolerance; than there just unlucky.

So why only look at twenty/thirty-something year old women as your consumer? Maybe because women do need more calcium in their diet than men and this is a prime age where they begin to think about their body in the far of future. When they are children or teenagers they are

not thinking about osteoporosis or bone decay, but when they reach their thirties they could possibly be thinking about their body in the future. Maybe this was their true intention of their “Mall Smarts” commercial; not the sexist, ageist undertones of what I perceived the commercial to show.