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Who Wears the Pants?

While Americans are bombarded with ads almost all of their waking hours, each ad was specifically designed with a certain type of consumer in mind. Both just trying to market their pants, advertisements from Duluth Trading Company and Replay jeans may be lumped into the broad category of clothing commercials. Each, however, uses unique tactics to get potential customers' attention and hopefully their business. Through completely different visualization, implications, and promoted values, each company persuades a nearly opposite demographic to buy its in-essence identical products: pants.

Based in Belleville, Wisconsin, in the United States, Duluth Trading Company creates products very fitting for a corporation born in the good ol' Midwest. Popular stereotypes of the region are the abundance of cheese, beer, sports fans, snow, and classic patriotic Americans, and all of these commodities can be associated with the classic image of the hard-working American man. It is fitting then that Duluth makes clothing suitable for just such men. One of their most popular items is their fire hose work pants. In order to advertise this garment, Duluth released a cartoon narrated by a deep, manly voice, beginning with a depiction of "average work pants vs. a giant angry beaver," where the man is bitten in two at the legs. Then the viewer sees "Duluth Trading fire hose work pants vs. a giant angry beaver," where the pants smash the beast's teeth. The conclusion is then stated that "Duluth Trading fire hose work pants [are] tougher than an angry beaver's teeth."

The man drawn as the model for these pants is what would come to mind for many as the average working man. He has a stocky build; wears a quarter-sleeve button-up shirt, ball cap, and boots; and is sporting a thick beard. This ad allows men fitting this description, typically middle-aged, to feel directly connected with this ad, as if they could obtain the level of comfort and safety from wearing these pants that a fictional doppelganger achieves against a large perturbed beast. This fictional man also possesses an even deeper voice than the narrator, exemplifying his extreme masculinity. This commercial not only tells the average working man he needs these pants for supreme comfort and safety on the job, so that if he wants to do his job well he will buy these pants, but also implies they will increase his manhood by telling him that tough men wear this brand. Along with the intense illustration of masculinity, this advertisement also appeals to men who value being funny. While the ad catches the viewer's eye and maintains that attention, the notion that men who have a good sense of humor like this brand is embedded within the viewer's subconscious, so consumers are more likely to remember laughing at this ad in times when they need to buy pants. While the look of the man in the ad seems more common among middle-aged men, using a cartoon and not an actor leaves the age and details of the man obscure. This allows the commercial to target working men of all races between ages eighteen and sixty-five. There is no specification of a wedding ring, so the ad targets include husbands, fathers, bachelors, and widowers alike. Within an advertising cartoon lasting thirty-five seconds, Duluth Trading Company is able to appeal to men that value having strong masculinity, toughness, a good work ethic, and a good sense of humor; men who want durability and safety of their purchased items; and any women looking to get a gift for a man with such values.

Originating in Asolo, Italy, Replay clothing company bears the glamour and fashion-forwardness of this iconically beautiful country. While attempting to sell their pants, just as

Duluth Trading Company was, Replay utilizes vastly differing tactics to speak to and persuade their vastly different target audience. Their advertisement begins with the first names of the designers and the line's name, Replay TOUCH, as an upbeat, edgy song begins. This ad allures women who value having important name brands and designers associated with their wardrobe. Viewers are then shown three very thin, conventionally attractive women who have very similar appearances with middle-parted, long, wavy hair; similar heights and weights; and appealing features accented by "natural" make-up. They are slightly varying in complexion, however, with a centered pale blond flanked by a darker, more ethnic-looking woman and another dark-haired, olive-toned woman. They all have exposed chests and feet and are all wearing the same ensemble in varying washes: a quarter-sleeve denim jacket and tight skinny jeans. They dance slightly, pose provocatively, and touch one another as the camera shows close-ups of their feminine assets, such as their lips, chests, and waists. The advertisement ends with the campaign "#touchit" and another frame of the line's name, Replay TOUCH.

One target that may seem obvious is young, fashionable women with extra money who value expensive clothing. This brand obviously allows these types of girls to directly identify with their models, not limiting this to one race, even though they do limit the camaraderie to thin, stylish women. So, of course, ladies aged sixteen to twenty-nine who are accustomed to lavish lifestyles will be attracted to this advertisement, picturing themselves looking as sexy and fashionable as these models. The less-obvious demographic, however, is all the women who do not look like these models but feel they should or wish to, such as women aged twenty-nine to thirty-five who either have always wanted this thin physique or had it and lost it. The ads imply that any woman reminiscing about her youth or longing to feel young, beautiful, sexy, or desirable may feel closer to that idealistic version of herself in these pants. If the customers are

willing to pay a little more, they are able to capture this wistful ideology of something they may never have and feel they are somehow missing. This advertisement, which lasts thirty-seven seconds, clearly conveys that Replay wishes to make women feel as if they have strong femininity; that they are more beautiful, thinner, and have more sex appeal; and that they are more youthful or stylish while wearing these jeans. Their tactics appeal to women who think they are these things and want to maintain that feeling and to women who wish to be these things.

In America, corporations manipulate the emotions, desires, and upheld values of many different demographics in order to sell products. The advertisements directed towards men tend to play on the uber-masculine stereotype that “real men” who work hard can utilize these dependable, sensible items to make their life easier. The advertisements targeting women tug on the desire to ooze femininity, that “good women” will use these products to increase their sex appeal or feel better about themselves. Duluth Trading Company and Replay clothing company both attempt to simply sell pants in each of these commercials. However, even though half of their age demographic, their targeted races, and nationalities exposed to the ads overlap, because each product is directed towards a specific gender, each company produced a completely different ad, and each will profit from very different corners of the clothing market.