

Looking At Gender In The Levi's Commercials

Levi's began to manufacture jeans around the 1870s, and jeans were originally working men's clothing. During the 1950s people aged 13 - 19 became known as teenagers, prior to this people were all either children or adults. Jeans became popular clothes for teenagers because they were seen as a sign of rebellion against parents and authority.

The jeans wearing teenagers then grew up and become parents meaning that the next generation of youngsters saw older people wearing the jeans and refused to wear them. This forced jeans to become unfashionable through the early 80s.

In the mid 80s Levi's hired a highly successful advertising company (Bartle Bogle Hegarty) who with a series of adverts turned around the situation, resulting in the sales of Levi's jeans rising 20 fold.

Advertisement 66 features a young man in a city apartment who wears the jeans. The man is what could be described as "conventionally good looking," and is very tanned, at the start wearing just boxer shorts. At this time many people thought that tanned meant you were healthy, and seeing a good looking healthy man wearing the jeans would convince many teenagers to wear them.

The man does some exercises, showing off his body before slipping the jeans on. Whilst he is doing this focus is upon the crotch and buttocks of the jeans. This makes the man more sexually attractive to impressionable viewers.

The man then looks in the mirror at himself, with a satisfied expression, as if he is thinking that he looks good, before picking up a picture of a woman who may be his girlfriend, or a woman that he is preparing to meet.

You can faintly hear sirens in the distance, which are usually heard when there is an emergency. These may be indicating warning, or danger. There is excitement in the air.

The next shot shows the man lowering himself into the bath, with the cooling water in this scene being a dramatic contrast to the heat and excitement previously, however the way the water seeps over the man's crotch area would be for many very sexually attractive. At the end of this commercial the text "Now available pre-shrunk" is displayed. In the past jeans would not be available pre-shrunk, and people would often sit in the bath to help mould the jeans to the shape of their bodies. As these advertisements were set around the 1950s, when jeans would not be available pre-shrunk, we assume that the man was sitting in the bath to shrink his jeans to his body.

In this advert the image of a typical single male seems to be portrayed. The man is conventionally good looking, with a good body, and we are led to believe that he is meeting a girl. This is how a lot of young men at that time would wish to be,

meaning that many viewers would believe wearing the jeans would make them more good looking, and more likely to get a woman.

Advertisement 67 shows the text "Now available stone washed" at the end, as in the past people would also often wash their jeans along with stones to create a stone washed effect.

This features another conventionally good-looking man again, walking into a laundrette. He walks in and towards a washing machine, with two small boys staring and admiring him over the top of a washing machine, before their mother pulls them away. We also see 2 young women admiring the man, they are looking at him and giggling, obviously embarrassed by their admiration.

The man is very well groomed, with slick hair and obviously takes care over his appearance. You can see by the way he walks and looks that he is very confident.

He walks over to a washing machine and begins to remove his clothes. When he pulls off his belt it runs smoothly through the belt loops, undressing almost like a stripper. He then begins to undo the buttons at the front of his jeans as the camera again focuses on this. When he pulls off his jeans the underwear that he is wearing is snow white. This is a sharp contrast with his jeans and tanned skin.

After taking off his clothes he puts them into a washing machine, before tipping a bag of stones into the machine with them.

He then turns and sits down next to a large man, who wears dull clothes and doesn't stand out like the young man wearing the jeans. The man has an almost disapproving look upon his face. At the very end of the advert the young man who stripped begins to read a newspaper, which is a very everyday act, which is showing how the man doesn't feel like him stripping is anything out of the ordinary, indicating confidence and boldness.

The music played throughout this advert is "Heard it on the grapevine," which is how gossip is often referred to and suggests that the man is something to gossip about, and somebody that is talked about.

For young people, again they see somebody good looking wearing jeans, and in this advert the man wearing the jeans is admired by others, looks confident and stands out. Many people seeing this would believe that the jeans would make them stand out like that young man and purchase Levi's jeans.

Advert 72 is set in the middle of nowhere, and begins with a man and woman standing next to their broken down car on a road which is surrounded by open space. The man is not what would be describe as conventionally good looking, wearing a suit and thick glasses.

A good-looking man stops and gets out of his car to help the couple. This man is again confident and well groomed, along with wearing Levi's jeans. He is attempting to fix the couples car, whilst doing so he spills hot oil on the other mans foot, which is also in keeping with the theme of heat/sexuality.

The man begins to remove his jeans. The woman looks over at him admiringly, with the man she is with, possibly her boyfriend, looking shocked and stepping in front of her as if he is trying to shield her from the other man. This man is obviously not admiring the Levi's, and by showing the less attractive of the two men not admiring the jeans, audiences may feel that by not wearing the Levi's they may be looked upon as this man is.

Once the man removes his jeans, he proceeds to tie the two cars together using his jeans. He then gets into his van and beckons the woman to him. Glancing once at the man she was with, she goes to the car with the man who was wearing the jeans. This is another example of how people in these advertisements are much more attracted to those who wear the jeans than those who don't. Also how it has seemed to be the men who call the women to them, and the women who fall for the good looking men.

They then drive away, with the jeans helping to tow the broken down car. Whilst driving up a hill, the man who was wearing the jeans thrusts the gear stick sharply, meaning the bumper then falls off the car and the other man is left behind. We notice that the bumper falls off and not the Levi's, which is showing how strong they must be.

The song that is playing in the background is "Be my baby," which is in keeping with the theme of the man getting the girl. It was almost as if they had a wordless conversation, the man stripping to attract the woman to him, while she looks on, and him nodding to her to get into the car with him. The song backs up these actions strongly.

This advert depicts the man wearing the jeans getting the girl, while the other man is left behind in more ways than one. The man wearing the jeans being admired by the woman seems to be a pattern throughout these commercials, as it has not yet been the woman who wears the jeans and attracts the man to her.

The text "separates the men from the boys" is displayed at the end of this commercial, I think that this is shown in several ways in the advert. They are trying to show that the man who has his woman taken away from him by a much more conventionally good looking man is a boy, whereas the other is a man. Also the jeans are tied between the 2 vehicles, they are literally separating the men from the boys. This catchphrase indicates that you are more of a man if you choose to wear Levi's.

Advertisement 74 is set on a beach, showing another good-looking man wearing Levi's jeans, and carrying a surfboard. The man removes the jeans then leaves them on the beach. He bends down towards his dog and points at the jeans, as if he is telling the dog to guard the jeans for him. He then walks away with his surfboard.

A typically good looking woman in a bikini comes along the beach and sees the jeans. She looks for a moment before putting them on. When she attempts to walk away the dog grabs her leg and barks at her. She tries in vain to shake the dog off, but isn't able to before the young man originally wearing the jeans comes back.

The man laughs and then they walk away together laughing.

Again this advert shows the man who is wearing the jeans getting the woman. In all the adverts that I have written about so far it has been the man wearing the jeans every time, and usually the man who is admired by the woman. In this advert the woman does put the jeans on, and the man looks at her in an admiring way, but again it is the man wearing the Levi's that gets the woman and the woman that is attracted to the man, or to his jeans, showing how the Levi's are once again the reason that the man gets the woman.

Many impressionable audiences would believe that buying the jeans would make them instantly attractive, as the people featuring in these advertisements are, and seeing the man in the Levi's always getting the girl would be an incentive to many young men to purchase these jeans.

Throughout these adverts the men are all conventionally good looking, the women are usually fairly attractive also. They all appear to have confidence, such as the young man who strips in the laundrette. Also others always admire the men that are wearing the Levi's for their jeans, and they always get the woman, as opposed to the men who aren't wearing Levi's which in one advert one such man got his woman taken away. Overall there is the portrayal of people that wear Levi's being better looking, admired by others, and being attractive to others. This would convince many people to purchase the jeans.