

Why Do You Think the Adverts Produced by Bartle Bogle Hegarty in the 1980s Were So Successful in Improving the Sales of Levi's 501 Jeans?

Introduction

The history of jeans or denim goes way back far into the 1500s. Then was the birth of jeans – tightly woven cotton. Yet a century later in France, in the area of Nimes, there was produced a material combination of wool and silk. It earned the name 'denim', from the middle part of Serge de Nimes.

But the history of Levi jeans came years later when Bavarian born Loeb Strauss made his way to the Americas in 1847. Like many Europeans of that time, he wanted a new, fresh liberal life. And so in 1853, he changed his name to Levi and opened up a convenient store. It wasn't till 1853 that he started producing denim waist overalls that were primarily for working. He seemed to flourish in the business with his patent of riveted pocket corners.

In 1890, the line of 501 jeans was created. 501s get their name from the 5th production line and the denim material 01, thus 501s. In 1936, Levi Jeans patented the red lives label that appears on the side of pockets. When World War One whirled around, men fighting on the fronts took their working waist overalls with them to war, because they were seen as prized possessions. And by 1960, jeans became seen as fashionable casual wear, but yet they shrunk in the wash. So then, Levi's brought out another entrepreneurial idea and made pre-shrunk jeans; ready made to fit your body.

Next were the decorated jeans in the 70s and the sales of jeans rose again. But pandemonium struck Levis in the 80s when jeans were becoming 'old fashioned'. Therefore Levi's needed to hire a good advertising agency in order to boost the sales of Levi's and to make them the 'in' thing again. So Bogle Bartle Hegarty was hired for the job, and they produced a campaign of 11 advertisements.

Appealing to the Target Audience

The target audience for Bogle Bartle Hegarty was 15 to 20 year olds. The music used in the campaigns were from the sixties – in Launderette it was "I heard It Through the Grapevine" by Marvin Gaye, in Parting it was "When a Man Loves a Woman" by Percy

Sledge, in Fridge it was “Manish Boy” by Muddy Waters and in Pick Up it was “Be My Baby” by the Ronnettes. Lastly in Beach it was “Can’t Get Enough of Your Love” by Bad Company. They chose music that would appeal to teenagers and young adults and would get their attention on the T.V., to make the Levi’s commercials stand out, rather than be viewed as just another commercial.

Storylines in these commercials often showed Levi’s man as a rebel because teenagers at times can be seen as rebels. The storyline of Launderette is that a young rebellious Levi’s man enters into a Laundromat and just undresses and throws his jeans into the washer with stones. This action is signifying that Levi’s come stone washed. But Parting is a bit different. Here, a young service man sets off (probably to fight in war), but leaves a package for his girlfriend. His girlfriend opens the package, and puts on the jeans which were the keepsake. This commercial views Levi’s as a keepsake-type of precious gift. In Fridge, the typical Levi’s man is depicted again – sweaty, hot and rebellious. He comes into a diner grabbing the attention of all there, by walking coming in his boxers. He walks over to the refrigerator and pulls out his Levi’s, puts them on and then leaves the diner, riding off into the sunset. The commercial is meant to show that Levi’s are ‘cool’ in a metaphoric perspective by putting them in the Fridge. In Pick Up, a girl and her boyfriend are on a highway in the middle of a hot desert where their car had broken down. Then Levi’s man drives into the scene in a truck, and tows the car by tying the Levi jeans from truck to car. Then he detaches the other ‘nerdy’ boyfriend’s car and Levi’s man and the girl drive off in the truck. And in Beach, a girl goes to the beach and she comes across a pair of Levi’s, which she then puts on, just for her luck, the owner of the jeans, a guy, sees her in them, but lets her keep them, and so she gets the Levi’s and he gets the girl.

The storylines always involve a woman (usually the girlfriend) and a man (Levi’s man) liking each other – there is some sort of chemistry between the two. They have rather ‘sexy’ themes in them, such as the way the girl puts on her boyfriend’s jeans in parting or how Levi’s man put on his jeans in Fridge. These themes appealed to the adolescent age since it is their time of life where they become interested in the opposite sex, therefore the target audience can relate. Also, the advertisements in the campaign seems to run the ‘old versus young’ feel, such as in Launderette, when the older, heavyset man looks at Levi’s man just doesn’t ease, or in Fridge, when the elderly owner of the diner gives a disapproving look to Levi’s man.

Recurring Images

Throughout the campaign, there was strong use of recurring images. The advertising agency would insert a lot of red in the advertisements to refer to the red patent Levi's label. There would be a red dash to some scenes, or lights with a red glow. In *Laundrette* there were boys with red caps. No matter what type of commercial it was, Bogle Bartle Hegarty found ways to incorporate red, from red brush bristles in *Parting*, to red peppers in the refrigerator in *Fridge*. And again, in *Beach*, the girl was wearing a cap with a red peak. Other recurring images were close up views of backsides to show the comfortable fitting of the jeans, or the unique 501 button fly. They also did close ups on the belt pulling motion. Ray bans were a recurring image and there was usually a steamy atmosphere in the Levi advertisements. White underwear – particularly boxer briefs – were a recurring image. Motorcycles too were seen a lot, helping carry along the rebellion flavour.

Representations of People

Levi's man represents those who buy/ will buy Levi's and the woman represent his girlfriend. The elders represented the older population and their reactions to Levi's man. Older people are shown as if they are appalled by Levi's man and his attitude, like in *Fridge* when the diner owner looked at Levi's man with an astonished face. Levi's man has always got a girlfriend, like in *Parting*; he gives his girlfriend his jeans. The girlfriend is usually depicted as a sweet friendly girl, like in *Pick Up*. Levi's man is always portrayed as the rebellious, hot, cool guy. Examples of this are in *Fridge* as he walks down the steps, and in *Bath* as he is working out, doing chin ups. He is also seen as a man with a well kept body.

Detailed Analysis of a Typical Advert

Basically the typical Levi's advertisement that Bogle Bartle Hegarty produced would show Levi's man rebellious and he would always be able to outwit other people. As I mentioned earlier, Levi's men would always have a girl, whether he captured her in the advertisement or had her all along. The advertisements were very Americanized as they wanted to send the feel of the western world through to the European target.

Laundrette showed these things very well. Levi's man walks into an American Laundromat with his Ray Bans, and on the outside of the Laundromat there is a service man and an American car driving by. Inside the building, red is incorporated as there are boys with red caps who come and watch over the washing machines as Levi's man poured a bag of stones into the washing machine. The mother of the children sent her boys away from Levi's man, hinting that he was a bad influence since he had the rebellious feel to him. Then he undressed (took off his jeans) in front of everyone in the

Laundromat, showing his white boxers, while the ladies stared enticingly. Levi's man threw his pants into the washing machine and then sat down next to a man in his mid forties, who looked at him bluntly. Here, Levi's man showed that he didn't care about what others think because he is 'cool'. Then at the end of every Levi's commercial there is an end caption and in Launderette it was 'Now available stone washed'.

Messages and Captions

The messages and end captions of the advertisements were different for each advertisement, and the message could be completely different from the caption. The varieties of captions illustrate how well-rounded the jeans are, for example, there are well-rounded people who can accommodate more than one task or area of expertise. In this case, it exemplifies that Levi's can cater to more than one type of person.

In Launderette, the end caption was "Now available stone washed", but the advertisement was sending the message that Levi's man is rebellious and cool. Parting's end caption was "Occasionally available for women", yet the message sent through the visual presentation was that Levi's are jeans of value and have great significance – that they are much more than any other brand of jeans and could and should be given as a gift. In Fridge, the message depicted was saying that Levi's man is cool and sexy, very much like the message of Launderette, however, the caption at the end said "The original jeans", because Levi's are the backbone of the denim world since they have been around the longest. In Pick Up the end caption was "Separates the men from the boys", hinting that if you are a man, you wear Levi's, but if you are a nerdy, wimpy boy (using the nerdy boyfriend in the advertisement to get this idea across), you don't wear Levi's. Yet the message was that Levi's are strong, and they showed this by using Levi's jeans to tie the car and truck together, in order to tow the car. Beach had a more west coast twist with the beach scene. Its caption was "Levi's have always been sought after", since the girl wanted to wear the Levi's that she found at the beach. Nevertheless, the message was that Levi's gets you the girls, a commercial clearly directed to the guys. All these messages and captions were thought of by Bogle Bartle Hegarty cleverly in order to make Levi Jeans appealing.

Conclusion

As a result of the 1980s Levi's 501 campaign, the post advertising sales went from 131 to 2042! A huge demand was created, showing a great success, but not only was there a demand increase in the sales for jeans, but also the recurring white boxers featured in the advertisements. The impact of the campaign even made celebrities out of the persons playing 'Levi's man' in the advertisements and it promoted the music which had been used in them, causing sales in them to rise also. So clearly, as you can see, the

1980s Levi's 501 Jeans Campaign was a 110% success because of the tactics used – recurring images, American themes, and appealing music all mastered together caused the success of the campaign of Levis 501 jeans.

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