



## Levi's Case Study

When Levi's first released this succession of commercials, they planned to change the public's view towards jeans in general. Their target audience was set. They planned the advertisements to appeal to a younger generation. Levi's were always thought to be worn by working-class people for leisure-wear, or worn by the middle-class as work-wear. The jeans were always thought to be boring, dull & unfashionable. They prepared to take on a new image. Levi Strauss & Co. planned to breakdown the stereotypical barrier that the public had built up regarding these astounding denim trousers.

Levi's have been around for more than a century. The company was established in 1853. In 2003, Levi Strauss & Co. will be 150 years old. In 1873 their founder, Levi Strauss created the first blue jeans. From the mid 1950's onwards, jeans have been especially associated with particular types of male American youth heroes, including James Dean, the young Marlon Brando, & their Sixties followers – heroes who have become symbols of youth & rebellion in almost all areas, spanning over 5 generations of American & global culture.

Their new image was sexy, stylish & sophisticated. Their new target audience was younger, fresher, & had more money to spend. This target audience became known as the 'teenager'. Young people had their own spending power as consumers, following the hard times of the war, when, it seemed, everyone had a lot more money than anticipated.

A new group of people to suck into the ever expanding trade, looking for heroes to follow, & interests to pursue, Levi's used this opportunity & has drawn repeatedly on the idea of the 'rebel'.

Little did they know, or realise, what sort of impact this commercial campaign would bring to the population of teenagers, nor did they realise how many young people that they would affect. The number of Button Fly 501's sold in 1987 was over 20 times that of 1984, due to this break through in commercial advertising. Everyone wanted to get their hands on a pair of 501's.

The majority of adverts in this particular campaign were targeted at the male gender of the population. The commercials are often controversial

& always very lavishly produced. The social class varies quite dramatically, due to, the hero is mysterious, a rebel & very difficult to slot into a social class. Most of the adverts would fit into social class C, but appealing to higher social grades A & B. Despite the hero showing connotations of being of a low social grade, the adverts denote that wearing Levi's is cool, sexy, stylish &, although being a casual fit, they are versatile in the sense that the jeans can be dressed up to impress, but at the same time, can be worn every day for work. As well as being all of the above, Levi's have managed to get the right balance between rebellion & style. Many of the advertisements in this series show the hero in a state of nudity, often topless, this increases the sex appeal of Levi Strauss' revolutionary 501's. And whenever the hero's underwear can be seen the hero's 'pants' are ALWAYS white. The colour white shows connotations of being clean, fresh, healthy & virginal. White is the colour representing purity. Despite speculation & stereotypes 'rebellion' is not necessarily bad, but in this context good.

An example of their successful campaign is the advert referred to as 'The Beach'. In this advert the hero is represented as being the modern equivalent of a rebel that is a 'beach bum'. The iconography shows that the mise-en-scene, (a stunning, picturesque beach, which shows typical connotations of being in a country like Florida, possibly California; where the sky is clear blue, the surf is good & the sand is golden) shows connotations of being a typical American Summer. The style of buildings & road signs in the background denote a modernised & commercialised style, which shows connotations of America.

The music is non-diegetic. The song is titled 'Can't Get Enough' written by 'The Bad Company' in 1974, which plays all the way through the commercial. It particularly gives the whole atmosphere that American Summer feel. The words vary closely with the film to give the maximum impact & together form an excellent example of intertextuality.

It begins with the hero & his dog walking along a beach. The hero takes off his jeans & leaves them in the care of his dog whilst, (we assume) he goes surfing. The camera cross cut's to a man who eyes up the jeans whilst eating an ice cream but is anxious of the dog, which becomes defensive & starts excessive barking, so the man carries on walking. The next cross cut action of the camera is a medium shot of an attractive young lady wearing a bright yellow bikini. The girl (heroine) is represented as being no frills, clean cut, girl next door type. She spots the jeans & begins to put the jeans on with the dog watching her every move. As the heroine turns her back on the dog & attempts to walk away, the dog suddenly launches for her leg in an attempt to stop her. It almost seems as if the dog tries to take

the jeans back off her, although she is still wearing them. The camera then cross cuts into a long shot of the hero, returning with an embarrassed look on his face. The hero then praises the dog. Both hero & heroine look embarrassed for each other. They then become acquainted with one another. The final long shot of the couple & dog, walking off together, moving away from the camera. The slogan for this advert is 'Originals have always been sought after,' which is the final camera action, displaying the logo at the same time.

The target audience social class ranges from A-C, & is not aimed at a particular gender but is a unisex commercial. This advert appeals to a target audience with the age range of 15-30 years.

Another good example of Levi's successful ad campaign is number 10 'The Deal.' This advert starts off in a busy office, business people buzzing around with a generally hardworking atmosphere. The sound is diegetic, ambient of a busy office. Then the diegetic sound cuts out & non-diegetic music is heard. A song by 'The Steve Miller Band,' called 'The Joker,' which was released in 1973, then re-released in 1990, & as a result of this successful commercial reached number 1 in the charts. Notice that, again, the words vary closely with the action in the film.

The hero enters via the lift on a motorbike (possibly a Harley-Davidson) looking very cool & showing connotations of being a bit of a stereotypical hell's angel. He pulls up alongside the heroine looking very sophisticated & businesslike. The hero hands the heroine a brown paper parcel, which she opens, revealing a pair of Levi's 501's & then proceeds to put them on. The heroine takes her hair out of a ponytail & leaves it loose & mounts the bike behind. Then the camera shows the couple riding off happily into the sunset.

The slogan reads 'The Original Workwear' & the famous red logo is displayed once again.

The target audience is the same as the beach commercial.

Both adverts are similar in context, just different storylines. Almost all of the adverts in this commercial campaign have very sexy heroes & heroines. This series promoted Levi's sales of 501's quite dramatically, obviously having a large impact on the consuming public, which is what they didn't expect but I'm sure were pleased & at the same time shocked by the result. They promoted Levi's as being an intrinsic part of a great American tradition & embodied the American ideal of freedom & daring to be different. Through Levi's the American dream could become a reality!

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