

Ashely Joyce

COMM Theory 3010

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Rhetorical Analysis of 6 Celebrity Women in the Got Milk? Mustache Campaign

Introduction

The got milk? campaign was one of the most successful ad campaigns of our time. It started with tv commercials in 1993 and grew into celebrity milk mustache ads in 1995. The campaign ended in 2014, after milk sales leveled off. The campaign was created to stop the decline of liquid milk consumption. Various ads were used to persuade different audiences to drink more milk. This article includes a brief history of milk, the rhetoric within the got milk? campaign, and specifically, weight loss rhetoric in six got milk? ads, featuring thin celebrity women.

Literature Review

Humans have consumed animal milk for thousands of years because of the nutrients it contains. But the amount of liquid milk consumption grew after the invention of pasteurization in the 1850s. Before pasteurization, Americans consumed less than six ounces of liquid milk annually. That number increased to 30 gallons by the 1970s (Swindell, 2012).

Pasteurization made it possible for liquid milk to be safe to drink after being transported. However, in the 1850s, in America, pasteurization wasn't yet mainstream, farmers tried to produce milk in the cities. These city milk producers fed their cows swill, the residual

mash from nearby distilleries. Swill milk grew diseases like typhoid and cholera. The bad milk caused sickness in adults and the deaths of 8,000 infants in one year. Many connected the deaths to a lack of government oversight. (Weber-Smith 2020). Once milk producers switched to selling pasteurized liquid milk, it became a staple in American homes. And government oversight was linked to milk as well, through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

During World War 1 (WW1), the US Government ramped up milk production to send overseas for the soldiers. After WW1, there was a surplus of milk since it was no longer being exported. The USDA began promoting milk, stating that it was a vital source of nutrition. “Save on meat, if you must, but don’t skimp on milk” (Weber-Smith, 2020). As milk prices fell due to the surplus, milk producers started dumping their milk in an effort to raise prices. The US government stepped in, creating legislation that set a minimum price for milk (and later, subsidies and multimillion dollar advertising campaigns).

In 1946, the government instituted a National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This program helped feed kids in schools. The milk producers benefited from this program, which required all meals to include eight ounces of milk. The program is still active today.

By the 1950s, the United States Government, schools, and doctors were all promoting milk, saying it was important for children’s health and nutrition, milk even held a place as one of the food groups (and still does). By the 1960s, the beverage industry began to grow, with new drinks like, Pepsi, Gatorade, Mountain Dew, and Sprite. By 1990, milk sales were down (Thickstun 2011).

The California Department of Food and Agriculture formed the California Fluid Milk Processors Advisory Board (CFMPAB) in 1993, to facilitate marketing efforts to stop declining milk consumption in California. The members of the CFMPAB owned and ran dairies (Steel, 1998). CFMPAB is funded by California milk producers through a national program, which started in 1983 called the Dairy Checkoff Program. The Dairy Checkoff program requires dairy producers to contribute to the marketing of milk products, to increase milk consumption in America ("California Milk Processor Board", 2022).

To fund the new marketing initiative, the CFMPAB was able to collect three cents from each gallon of milk sold by producers, creating a \$23 million budget (Thickstun, 2011). That's "\$51.3 million in today's dollars" (Kauffman, 2022).

CFMPAB hired Jeff Manning a successful ad executive, who chose Goodby, Silverstein and Partners, a marketing firm in San Francisco, to create an ad campaign for milk. After consumer testing, they decided to market milk with tv commercials. "CFMPAB considered milk to be an important part of the us economy" (Steel, 2020). And they were putting all of their energy into increasing consumption.

CFMPAB highlighted three key reasons people are consuming less milk, both in California and the rest of the country. First, many people are worried about milk's fat content. The second problem is that milk is often regarded as kids drink. Third, there was competition from other beverages, like sport drinks, soda, tea, coffee and even bottled water (Steel, 1998).

Jon Steel, the planner for Goodby, Silverstein and Partners, created got milk?. He said, "The only thing interesting about milk is what's consumed with it" (Advertising Council Australia, 2020). And the got milk? campaign was born.

The campaign advertised milk, using the idea that a lack of milk causes suffering. They called this, 'deprivation strategy'. On October 29, 1993, the first tv commercial ran, featuring a man eating a peanut butter sandwich who is out of milk so he can't use milk to wash down his mouth full of food and can't win the \$10k prize offered for answering the question correctly from a radio show. This commercial, shot by now famous director Michael Bay (just out of grad school) was a huge success (Weber-Smith, 2020). The campaign boosted the image of milk and milk sales slowly began to rise for the first time in more than a decade (Thickstun, 2011).

In 1995, Goodby, Silverstein and Partners licensed the got milk? slogan to "the National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Program... [which] conducts business as the Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP). The program develops and finances generic advertising programs designed to maintain and expand markets and uses for fluid milk products" (USDA.gov). Through MilkPEP, the milk mustache campaign was created by art director Bernie Hogya and copywriter Jennifer Gold (Get Real. Got Milk?). This uber successful campaign is a spin-off, through licensing, of the initial got milk? campaign. The tag line got milk? is valued at more than \$1 billion (Manning and Keller, 2004).

The got milk? mustache campaign created about 350 ads. Of those ads, more than 180 were shot by Annie Leibovitz, an ultra-famous Rolling Stone Magazine photographer (Daddona, 2018). The ads were popular at a time when magazine sales were high, and the internet was in its infancy. These ads were a way for celebrities to get their face out in the world. Celebrities were paid \$25k to sit for the ad. Most gave the money to charity. And, each celebrity had to pass a test, proving that they loved milk before appearing in the ad (Weber-Smith, 2022).

The following rhetorical analysis of the got milk? mustache campaign, and six celebrity women appearing in the ads (1996-2008), will highlight the rhetorical devices the milk industry uses to persuade females to drink more milk and it's not always about the milk.

Analysis of Got Milk?

“Rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to situation” (Bitzer, 1968).

When a situation is urgent and can be positively modified through discourse, a rhetorical exigence is revealed. In the case of the got milk? campaign, the exigence was the continued decline of milk consumption in America. Dairy producers were hurting financially.

This created a sense of urgency (Poulakos, 1983). Urgency compels the rhetor (the milk industry) to act, hoping to end the crisis and restore order. To act, the California Department of Agriculture formed the California Liquid Milk Producers Advisory Board (CLMPAB), tasked to stop the decline through advertising.

With Goodby, Silverstein and Partners, CLMPAB started the got milk? campaign in hopes of producing “change by influencing the decisions and actions of persons who function as mediators of change, it follows that rhetoric always requires an audience” (Bitzer, 1968). Their audience, America!

When crafting this campaign, the got milk? team had to imagine Perelman's universal audience. A universal audience is both ideal and unreal because it doesn't really exist. Rhetors imagine a universal audience to craft rhetoric to persuade a particular one, but it will never be exactly the same. For got milk? the target audience was American consumers of all ages. And, in America, during the campaign and now, Americans are obsessed with celebrities. So, they used celebrities to sell milk. Then, the got milk? team took it a step further; they linked milk

with weight loss, through visual imagery and language printed on the ads. Americans, at the time of the campaign, and now, are obsessed with 'thin'.

Bitzer argues that there are three stipulations of a rhetorical situation, exigence, audience, and constraint. The CFMPAB saw the exigence and tasked the marketing team with defining the audience but they also had to think about the "standard sources of constraint [in American]... beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives, and the like (Bitzer, 1968). Could they win over the American audience? Yes.

Although liquid milk sales were declining, Americans believed milk was healthy, built strong bones, and "does a body good". For decades the US government promoted milk, parents promoted milk, and schools required milk be served with all lunches; milk must be good for you. But Americans in this era were also eager to be "cool". Milk had an image problem and the got milk? team found a way to make milk "cool", through celebrity ads (Manning and Keller, 2004).

Milk was already a staple in American culture and culture is "inherent in all communication and, thus, as fundamental to what constitutes (as well as constrains and enables) persuasion" (Fitch, 2003). The got milk? team had their finger on the pulse of America.

In the ads I selected for review, featuring six women, you will see how the got milk? campaign used "cultural resources for persuasion" (Fitch, 2003). By focusing on body image and weight loss, they were able to present expectations of behavior because being thin is engrained in American culture (Fitch, 2003).

"By exploiting people's proclivity to perceive themselves in the future..., the rhetorician tells them what they could be..., both goals and the directions which lead to those goals"

(Poulakos, 1983). An ad featuring a beautiful, thin, successful woman, will suggest to the audience that they too can be beautiful, thin, and successful (goal), if they drink milk (direction to the goal). But the campaign took the ads a step further, the language on the ads used words like, lean, lowfat, diet, weight-loss (goal), and drink milk (direction to the goal).

We now know, the decline of liquid milk consumption (exigence) gave way to the got milk? campaign. But what if it didn't? "Aristotle writes...rhetoric emerges from phenomena capable of carrying more than one possibility...rhetoric envisions possibilities that have not yet materialized...potentiality is simultaneously capable of both existing and not existing" (Foley, 2013). At that same moment, in the early 90s, milk producers could've, not acted. They could've watched the decline continue and decrease production, to match demand. Liquid milk would continue its decline and America would experience a decrease in cow animal agriculture along with milk consumption. Personally, I like this possibility.

But "rhetoric acts as a mechanism for survival...rhetoric is a defense mechanism" (Kennedy, 1992) and although Kennedy's research highlighted rhetorical energy with animals, it can be linked to the rhetorical energy of Big Business. Big Business is like an animal surviving on money. The dairy industry was in survival mode, using rhetoric as a defense mechanism.

Poulakos and Kennedy point out that timeliness and appropriateness are based on feelings. And together, they are the artistic elements of rhetoric (Poulakos, 1983 and Kennedy, 1992). What is said must be said at the right time and must conform to both audience and occasion. Since timeliness and appropriateness are determined by the rhetor, it is certain that the got milk? campaign arrived at the right time and found ways to create appropriate images and copy to boost milk sales.

Analysis of Six Got Milk? Images

Kate Moss (1996), Daisy Fuentes (1997), Rebecca Romjin (1998), Britney Spears (1999), Sheryl Crow (2006), and Taylor Swift (2008) were 6 of the 180 celebrities who posed for the got milk? campaign, photographed by famous Rolling Stone photographer, Annie Leibovitz. Their ads, spanning 12 years, were all very similar, supporting a common theme in the got milk? mustache campaign, weight loss, health, and beauty. All celebrity women donned the famous milk mustache.

The bolded words in the descriptions of the ads and in the ad copy, link the got milk? mustache campaign to weight loss, health, and beauty. In this time, 1996-2008, women looked to magazines for celebrity gossip, and health and beauty tips. These ads, all placed in magazines, are selling milk as a weight loss, health, and beauty drink. The following will look at rhetorical devices and the evolution of the ads, used to persuade women to drink more milk.

Kate Moss (1996)

Posed **standing**, pictured from the mid-back up, **naked**,
long hair against her back, looking over her left shoulder,
 holding a glass of milk with her right hand on the left side of the image,
 which highlights the fact that she is covering her **breasts**.

Ad Copy

Bones. Bones. Bones. Maybe so, but unlike 75% of women today, there's one way I'm **taking care** of mine. By getting lots of **calcium**. How? From **drinking** lots of **milk. 1%** ice cold. And besides, haven't you heard that the **waif** look is out?

Daisy Fuentes (1997)

Posed **standing**, pictured from the top of the leg up, in a **low-cut** gold **skin-tight** dress, **long hair** draped over left shoulder, left hip toward the camera, left hand on hip elbow out, right hand holding a glass of milk in front of a **thin abdomen**.

Ad Copy

Girls, let's talk about the "F word." **FAT**, it's **no good**, right? So, **I've got a solution**.

Drink 3 glasses **of fat-free milk** a day and you'll be getting all the **calcium** you need **without the fat**. So check it out. Ciaocito, baby!

Rebecca Romjin (1998)

Posed **standing** in Times Square, pictured from the knee up, in a white **sting bikini**, facing the camera, left leg stepping out to shift right hip the opposite direction, left hand on hip elbow out, **long hair** draped over shoulders, right hand holding a glass of milk at waist level next to **thin abdomen**.

Ad Copy

I'm here in the middle of Times Square to **show off** my **best feature**.

My **bones**. **What's my secret? Milk**. It helps give **bones** the **calcium** they need to stay **strong**. And since they **grow** until about age 35,

I'd say that's news worth putting **on display**.

Britney Spears (1999)

Posed **lying on her back** on a blue sofa in a **pink button-down** shirt and **tight purple capri** pants talking on a landline telephone,

her legs are pointed toward the ceiling, her right leg straight and her left leg is slightly bent,

her **abdomen is exposed**, a yellow plate with
milk and cookies sitting on the sofa next to her right hip and exposed abdomen.

Her left arm is bent to match her legs and her hand is touching her head.

Her **breasts** seem to be a bigger focal point than the milk and cookies.

Ad Copy

Baby, one more time isn't enough. **9 out of 10 girls don't get enough calcium.**

It takes **about** 4 glasses of **milk** every day.

So, when I **finish this glass, fill it up, baby. Three more times.**

Sheryl Crow (2006)

Posed **standing**, pictured from the feet up, in a hotel room, wearing black boots,

tight jeans, brown **low-cut** tank top slightly **opened** in the front,

long hair draped over both shoulders, facing forward,

holding a guitar case in her right hand slightly behind her back.

Holding a glass of milk in her right-hand mid-thigh level.

Ad Copy

To keep the crowd on their feet, **I keep my body in tune. With milk.**

Studies suggest that the **nutrients** in **milk** can play an important role in **weight loss**.

So if you're trying to **lose weight**, try **drinking 24 ounces of lowfat or fat free milk**

every 24 hours as part of your **reduced calorie diet**.

To learn more, visit 2424milk.com. It's a change that'll do you **good**.

Milk Your Diet. Lose Weight.

Taylor Swift (2008)

Posed **sitting**, in a **skin-colored** spaghetti strapped dress with lace at the hem, holding a guitar in her lap, left hand holding the neck of the guitar, right arm bent with elbow on guitar and right hand touching her cheek, **long hair** draped over both shoulders, facing forward, no milk pictured.

Ad Copy

Swift pick. In this business, you've got to be decisive. So **I choose milk**. Some studies suggest that **teens who choose milk** instead of sugary drinks tend to be **leaner**, and the **protein** helps build **muscle**. So **eat right, exercise** and **drink 3 glasses of lowfat or fat free milk a day**. Music to my ears.

The 1996 ad, with Kate Moss, a model famous for being thin, shows her naked back and the copy starts with, "Bones. Bones. Bones." The 1998 ad, with Rebecca Romjin, a thin actress, has ad copy that reads, "my best feature. My bones." She is pictured in a string bikini, truly showing off her bones. The rhetor wants the audience to make a connection, drinking milk equals being boney-thin. Of the six ads, these are the only two that mention the word bones, but all the ads contain thin women.

In the ads, the women are objectified, posed in sexy positions or with revealing clothing. They are inviting the viewer to long to be like them or to be with them. This makes the ads relevant to men and women. Although, the ad copy clearly relates to women, men would enjoy looking at these beautiful women wearing milk mustaches and looking sexy.

The women were always positioned in ways that increased the look of thinness. Four were standing, one was lying on her back, and one was sitting with a guitar in her lap. Five of the models draped their long hair over their shoulders, bringing the viewers eye toward their breasts or décolletage.

The models in the images move from naked, thin, and sexy to more clothed, thin, and sexy, visually putting less emphasis on bone-thin and more emphasis on healthy-thin. This visual evolution matched the ad copy evolution.

The ad copy always contains the word “milk”. In the earlier ads, 1996 included 1% milk and 1997 included fat-free milk. In the 1998 and 1999 ads, the copy only said milk, not indicating which type will aid in the goal of being thin. But the 2006 and 2008 ad copy used the word milk many times, including the words lowfat and fat free, together, in both ads. The conviction in the voice of the ads began to change as well. In the 1997 ad, Daisey Fuentes says fat isn’t good and the solution is milk. In 1998, Rebecca Romjin says, her best feature is her bones, and her secret is milk. Brittney Spears, in the 1999 ad, suggests that she drinks 4 glasses of milk a day, but the copy doesn’t link that to being thin. By 2006 and 2008, the ad copy includes words like, keep my body in tune, studies suggest, tend to be, and can play an important role. These newer ads don’t have the celebrities stating milk is the reason for their thinness, but that milk could be the reason and that they drink milk.

The goal of these six ads was to increase milk consumption among women, by showing and telling them that milk will make them thin, a goal of women in American culture at this time. Despite the evolution, the message stayed consistent.

Milk sales increased, early in the campaign, then leveled out for the remainder. Got milk? successfully stopped the decline of the milk consumption problem but didn't achieve the goal of a continued increase in consumption. The campaign ended in 2014.

Conclusion

Returning to Kennedy's theory of rhetorical energy relating to animals, Big Business is an animal, an apex predator, and Money is his food. Events that decrease his food supply (his bottom line) will demand rhetoric for survival, even if the rhetoric is half-truth. In the case of Milk, it isn't essential to your health (Weber-Smith, 2022) and might not support weight loss. We've all been duped by got milk? rhetoric.

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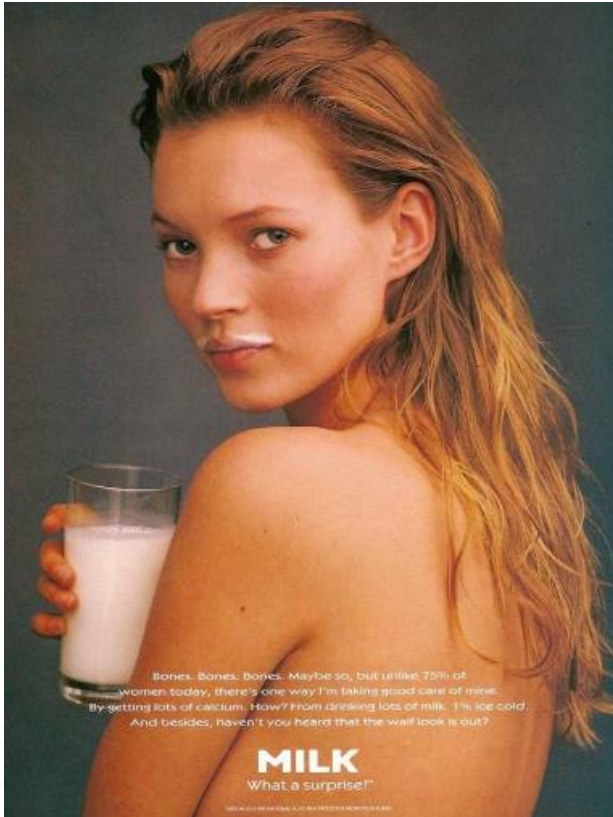
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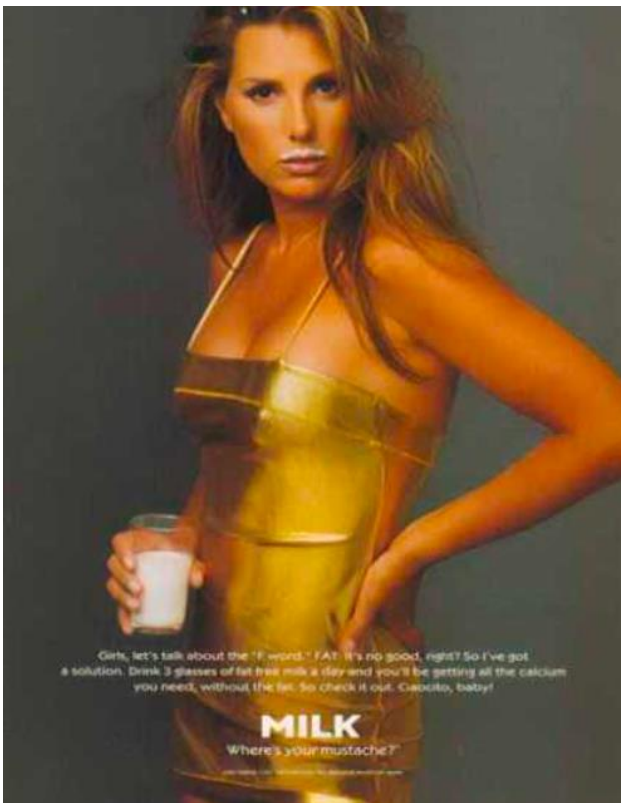
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Kate Moss - 1996

Bones. Bones. Bones. Maybe so, but unlike 75% of women today, there's one way I'm taking care of mine. By getting lots of calcium. How? From drinking lots of milk. 1% ice cold. And besides, haven't you heard that the waif look is out?



Daisy Fuentes - 1997

Girls, let's talk about the "F word." FAT, it's no good, right? So I've got a solution. Drink 3 glasses of fat-free milk a day and you'll be getting all the calcium you need without the fat. So check it out. Ciaocito, baby!



Rebecca Romjin - 1998

I'm here in the middle of Times Square to show off my best feature. My bones. What's my secret? Milk. It helps give bones the calcium they need to stay strong. And since they grow until about age 35, I'd say that's news worth putting on display.



Britney Spears – 1999

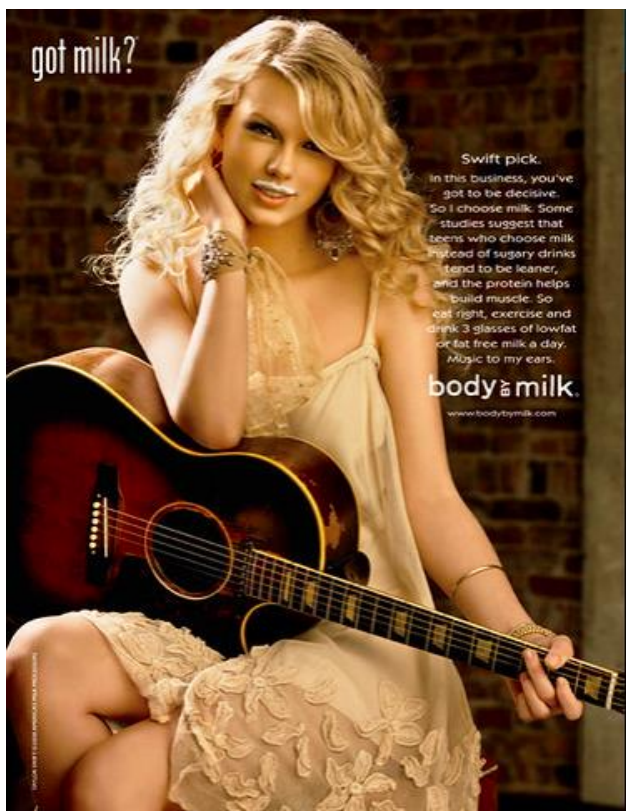
Baby, one more time isn't enough. 9 out of 10 girls don't get enough calcium. It takes about 4 glasses of milk every day. So when I finish this glass, fill it up, baby. Three more times.



Sheryl Crow - 2006

To keep the crowd on their feet, I keep my body in tune. With milk. Studies suggest that the nutrients in milk can play an important role in weight loss. So if you're trying to lose weight, try drinking 24 ounces of lowfat or fat free milk every 24 hours as part of your reduced calorie diet. To learn more, visit 2424milk.com. It's a change that'll do you good.

Milk Your Diet. Lose Weight.



Taylor Swift – 2008

Swift pick. In this business, you've got to be decisive. So I choose milk. Some studies suggest that teens who choose milk instead of sugary drinks tend to be leaner, and the protein helps build muscle. So eat right, exercise and drink 3 glasses of lowfat or fat free milk a day. Music to my ears.