

A Loyal Friend:
A Breakdown of Chevrolet's "Maddie" Advertisement

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of the Chevrolet commercial, Maddie. In this piece, I go over a few topics based on observations I made while watching the video and I will elaborate on details that stand out. The advertisements overall goal is to convince its viewers to buy a Chevy product. I will point out and clarify when and how the ad attempts to influence you into becoming a customer. One of the more powerful methods used is the correlation of trust between Maddie and Chevy products. The advertisement wants to make its viewers believe that Chevrolet can be trusted as much as trusting the family dog. The video follows the life of Maddie to cause potential customers to see this and remember their pets or essential milestones in life that are mimicked in the ad. By doing this, it causes future customers to view Chevy in a more favorable light and therefore more likely to buy from them.

Keywords: Media Analysis, Advertising, Chevy, Dogs, Memories, Emotional Appeals

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There are few people and emotions in life that we can trust unconditionally from birth. A mother's love or the comfort brought forth with the affection of the family dog are examples of this. It is because of the scarcity of this feeling that we learn at an early age to rely on those we trust in times of need. The Chevrolet (2014) corporation exploits this phenomenon in the production of their ad, "Maddie." This ad, while it seems to be about a dog and her owner, preys upon our innate need to have someone or something to trust whole-heartedly. This company utilizes the imagery of a young child bonding with her first dog to get viewers to sympathize and remember their first childhood pet. Chevrolet is selling a trust-worthy "friend" in the form of a car that is reliable like man's best friend. By doing this, it shows how society has begun to treat cars as more than just machines to be used when needed, but instead as equals to our canine companions.

In this commercial, the attention of the viewer is grasped by a golden retriever named Maddie and her owner. The scene opens up in a poorly lit room with Maddie sitting on a table and her owner petting her affectionately. Sorrowful music plays as the commercial takes a look back on Maddie's life with her owner. Glimpses of Maddie and her owner are shown walking down a park with leaves surrounding them bundled up from the fall cold and then transitions to the owner wearing a dress on a street sidewalk along with Maddie. Next, a silver car with the trunk open with Maddie laying in the middle comes to view. A box carried by the owner as her parents leave the vehicle to look upon an apartment complex hinting the young woman is moving alone. The young woman tells her parents, "it's old, but it has big windows and lots of light," as they question how safe the building was for her (Chevrolet 2014).

After we catch another glimpse of Maddie and the young woman embracing in a hug on her graduation day, she is dressed in a black gown and cap with Maddie as her parents capture the moment. In the next scene, the owner is pacing up and down along her room littered with books and posters. Maddie is laying on the bed next to the young woman as she talks over the phone with her assumed boyfriend when she asks, “are you breaking up with me?” She slumps down on the bed distraught from the breakup as Maddie watches her (Chevrolet 2014).

Portrayed in the next scene are a young boy and young girl sitting in the living room on the couch. Her hair nicely done and makeup flawless as she looks at the boy next to her. The boy then leans over and puckers his lips for a sweet kiss with the girl. The girl looks at him with a disgusted expression when he tries to kiss her causing Maddie to jump in for the rescue as she growls at the boy to stop him from kissing her owner (Chevrolet 2014).

After the commercial shows a silver Chevy car with the young girl, her father, and Maddie. Viewers can tell the young owner is learning to drive for the first time based on the frequent jerks made. The father tells her, “smooth and steady,” as she looks at him with fear, but she takes a deep breath and looks ahead. Flashing to the next scene is the young woman as a little girl with Maddie right next to her blowing out her birthday cake (Chevrolet 2014).

Next, the audience sees the little girl in a makeshift tent with lights and pillows surrounding Maddie and her. She holds a big flashlight with Maddie snuggled in her lap as she reads from a book. The commercial jumps to the next scene with the little girl’s parents coming out of the same silver Chevy as they watch her run to a basket filled with puppies. The little girl picks up one of the adorable golden retriever puppies and says, “this is Maddie,” as she rubs her nose with the puppy. Back to the present, the owner now clearly as an adult kisses Maddie on the nose as she says her goodbyes to her life-long best friend. The ad ends with the parents and the

little girl carrying Maddie as a puppy to the family silver Chevy with a quote in the middle that reads, “A best friend for life’s journey” (Chevrolet 2014).

Every human being needs a basic physical and emotional support system to live and thrive happily. These needs in turn, however, are the target of advertising. By using our emotions against us, ads influence its viewers into partaking of their products or services. As stated in the article, “Ads Don’t Work That Way,” the author highlights this marketing technique “The objective [of advertising],” the article continues, “is to seed positive ideas and memories that will attract you to the brand,” (Simler, 2014, para. 4). Chevrolet uses this method by strategically showing Maddie and her owner in critical places throughout the advertisement so that when viewers experience similar situations, they will be reminded of the commercial.

Throughout the entirety of the video, the ad tries to forge a correlation between the dog, Maddie, and Chevy products. By emphasizing that Chevrolet can be trusted as much if not more so than Maddie, customers are being led into a sense of security. The second observation of note in the video was the connection made between Chevy products and specific memories. The advertisement stresses this association by demonstrating that Chevy products will survive the test of time. Customers will begin to place more value in Chevrolet because they have been deceived. Kilbourne (2006) alludes to this fallacy, “Even more important, products don’t betray us,” stipulating that by trusting Chevy, the company cannot possibly lead its customers astray (para. 4). The ad illustrates this by showing the same silver car at multiple places in the video emphasizing that their products will be there when we need them.

The ad wants its viewers to see Chevy as more than a car company. By highlighting the break up the owner suffers, Chevrolet makes viewers more susceptible to manipulation such as, “emotional inception,” as described by Simler (2014). This type of influence takes root slowly

over time and expertly paints Chevy in the role of the perfect filler for the void created in the ad that Maddie fills to comfort her owner. In doing this, Chevrolet gives the customers what they desire most at the beginning, someone to trust.

Maddie is more than just a pet. She is a symbol, the embodiment of loyalty, trust, and reliability. The video touches the hearts of its viewers by showing a story of an owner's love and a dog's journey through life from beginning to end. The ad elicits strong feelings that many can relate to when pondering on memories of their pets. Through the use of sympathetic images, key product placement, and thought-provoking music, this commercial ensnares its viewers presenting the brand Chevrolet as a company that customers could count on day in and out, just like man's best friend.

References

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