

**Beamers or Babies:
Phallex—Advertisement or Confusion?**

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We all know that advertisement is the best method to sell or introduce any product to the market, but it is also clear that some companies are also selling certain values to their customers. Sometimes the way advertisement is used can lead to subjects other than what is being advertised. Phallex condoms is a perfect example of this type of advertising using a parody ad to more clearly show what advertisers may be implying between the lines. Instead of promoting the idea that the use of this brand of condoms will prevent Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs) or unwanted pregnancies, it's stating that the use of these condoms will save people from a poor financial state. In "Jesus Is a Brand of Jeans," Kilbourne (2006) says, "Advertising creates a world view that is based upon cynicism, dissatisfaction and craving. Advertisers aren't evil. They are just doing their job, which is to sell a product; but the consequences, usually unintended, are often destructive" ("Substitute Stories," para. 4). This commercial lives up to that claim. The integrity of young people and the values of men are being stepped on, and through this advertisement, the message that material things are more valuable than family, and that men are more interested in material things than family is being sold.

This Phallex (2006) advertisement is set in a nightclub, which is used to make viewers identify themselves with their typical night out. Obviously, this commercial is trying to get young people's attention. Attractive-looking females and handsome-looking men are used to identify the single lifestyle. Throughout the commercial, there are young people flirting and meeting each other. In the background, there's a female humming along with the music. As the main character in the ad goes on and introduces Phallex condoms, he states that he's not scared of getting STDs but he is petrified of obtaining LFDs (Life-term Financial Deprivation) (Phallex, 2006, 00:35). Then he explains all the things he could buy with the money he would use to pay

child support if he had a child. For example, he could have a new BMW every two years or a very luxurious home (Phallex, 2006, 00:54). At the end of the commercial, a young attractive female approaches him and asks him if he is ready. He grabs his condom and replies, “Always” (Phallex, 2006, 01:03). The ad ends with a printed statement saying, “Putting a protective layer between you and poverty” (Phallex, 2006, 01:07).

Saying that LFDs are more of a serious issue than STDs creates a confusing message. Young adults have already been thought of as immature, irresponsible, and thoughtless. In reality, young adults, for the most part, are very concerned about getting sexually transmitted diseases, and as a rule are responsible. This advertisement contributes to the image of young people being shallow and only focused on going out to party. Additionally, viewers are given the idea that clubs are only places for young people to meet and have sex with perfect strangers. For the most part, nightclubs are not necessarily that way. Many people go to nightclubs with friends and partners to dance, socialize, and have fun. Often, they do not have sex on their minds. Playing on a simplistic stereotype of young people contributes to a larger view of how young adults are seen in society.

More disconcerting, however, are the myths about men that this advertisement perpetuates. In this advertisement, having a child is being used as the cause of financial burden in the young community. The commercial implies that for most men, their main concern while having sex with a female is to make sure not to get her pregnant because of the financial burden it may cause. In addition, when the man in the ad gives examples of all the things he could be buying with the child support money; it assumes that men now are more materialistic than emotional. It suggests that men would rather have occasional sex without any type of responsibility. It assumes that for men today it's more important to have a nice new BMW in their driveway every two years than to have a child; moreover, it promotes the idea that the status

symbols are more valuable than children are. While advocating use of condoms to prevent pregnancy is not outside of what any condom manufacturer should be doing, by focusing on the value of material things, and promoting the idea of men as materialistic, the ad diminishes men who actually take care of their responsibilities without thinking of it as a financial burden, and those men who do value having a family. By default, it sends the message that women are the ones who want children, not men, furthering the stereotype that men are not family-oriented and that women only think of having babies and trapping men into paying child support.

The ad could be construed as advocating careful choice in childbearing, and that is a noble cause, but instead, the ad points toward a message that being a father is not as valuable as having a nice car or home. It focuses on material wealth, and by doing so places human life in a position far below those markers of wealth. Phallex sells the myth that possessions are more important than consideration for a partner, or family.

Young people fight against a number of negative stereotypes these days. The idea that they are irresponsible is one of the most prevalent, followed closely by the idea that they are only concerned with partying and having fun. Furthermore, men are cast as uncaring and selfish throughout the media. The examples of this in the Phallex ad, parody those images, and in doing so make very relevant points: our ideas of young people, and young men specifically, are views that disrespect their integrity and values. In "The Idols of the Marketplace," Kavanaugh (1986) writes, "If we ask ourselves what values we would like to see illuminating the lives of our children, students, parishioners and co-religionists, I think that designer jeans would fall pretty far down the list" (para. 4). After a close analysis of this advertisement, it's easy to see that Phallex condoms would fall pretty far down the list as well.

References

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