

**Chocolate Brain:
Melts In Your Mouth, Not In Your Hands**

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Let's talk about sex, shall we? This question draws the attention of the average person; mention the word *chocolate* along with it and there is guaranteed to be a strong and most likely attentive audience. These two categories are amongst America's elite and beloved subjects of discussion, and in this case, they seem to fit very well together--sex and chocolate. This may have very well been M&M's thinking strategy when they developed Ms. Brown's 2012 "One Track Mind" candy commercial featuring William Levey. M&M's took the idea of a sexy Latin-lover and merged it with the idea of a sassy talking, milk chocolate candy (played by singer/actress Vanessa Williams) and came up with a perfect skit for a slightly naughty but nice way to imply stereotypical ideas of the simplistic and insecure thoughts of some women and the manipulative yet charming ways of some men, played out in a new millennium dating scenario. Ultimately implying that with the right ambiance, the right words and the right eye-candy, anyone can be distracted to the point of the sale, and in this particular commercial, M&M's (2012) takes it a bit further and incorporates the implication of interracial dating and some suggestive love play. Overall, the ad uses stereotypes and common assumptions about men, women, Cuban-Americans and African-Americans, showing how easily we accept these views as fact.

The setting of the commercial takes place on the patio of an up-scale restaurant, where Ms. Brown, a milk chocolate, hard-shell coated candy, and William Levey, an attractive Cuban-American actor/model, are seated across from each other under an umbrella shaded, white linen-draped table for two. It is sunny and bright out, with very few people seated in the background at a distance from them. The feel for the time frame of this commercial possibly indicates that it's

later on in the afternoon, perhaps some time after lunch. The fact that they are slightly secluded from others, allows the viewer to focus on and feel connected to the actors, thus allowing them to be drawn into their body language and dialog. This strategy allows M&M's marketers to use association to link viewers intimately and allows them to personally relate to either Ms. Brown's or Levey's character. This is the first step in targeting M&M's intended audience by placing their characters, to include the viewers, in a setting that implies the intimacy of a date.

Levey's body language conveys that he is a confident smooth-talking and very charming man. His fair skin, light eyes, and dark hair contrast well with his pink pastel button down shirt that is slightly opened at the neck. He looks over at Ms. Brown and smiles ever so enticingly as he holds the rim of his glass of water in his hand, and tells Ms. Brown that she "looks delicious today" (M&Ms, 2012). Ms. Brown un-flattered and somewhat dis-interested responds by mocking Levey, "Delicious?" She goes on to tell him that at times she believes that he only likes her because she's an M&M's. This is Ms. Brown's first indication of being insecure and the first linkage to the female audience. Many times men give women compliments only to receive a response other than thank you. Levey, disturbed and slightly concerned with Ms. Brown's response, quickly rebuts, "That's not true!" He goes on to exclaim that, "what matters most to me is what's on the inside." In this statement, M&M's directly attempts to connect with those consumers who long to hear the unrelated sweet nothings that tend to sooth the insecurities of their heart, and here M&M displays the second connection with the manipulative yet charming ways of some men. In particular, M&M's is connecting to women, and perhaps even more particularly to African-American women. However, even more obvious is the play for the woman who eschews the value of outward appearance. In coupling these two together, M&Ms

implies an acceptance of inter-racial relationships, while playing on the stereotypes of the Latin lover and hard-shelled African-American woman.

As the commercial continues, Ms. Brown replies to Levey next. “I’m made of pure milk chocolate on the inside” (M&Ms, 2012) The African-American population has been referred to as chocolate on many occasions, and the fact that Ms. Brown is played by a renowned African-American woman, leads us to believe even more so that M&M’s was attempting to convey a much deeper connotation in the dialogue than what was being presented on the surface. Women, and even more particularly, African-American women, have, as mentioned before, been portrayed and recognized as hard shelled, yet underneath, a deeply insecure segment of the female species. Ms. Brown fits the description of these characteristics quite well and even more so when Levey goes on to reply, “And I love that about you” indicating that he allegedly loves Ms. Brown for her personality and not her status. Instead of accepting and acknowledging Levey’s plea, she disregards his possible sincerity, crosses her arms and replies, “And here I thought you loved me for my brain.” Once again, and much like a great majority of women portrayed in the media, Ms. Brown overlooks the fact that Levey is paying her compliment; on the flip side of that, the statement implies Ms. Brown’s mistrust of him—another nod to his sexually-focused nature. M&M’s makes Levey out to be a sensitive, caring hunk of a man who is ultimately trying to win Ms. Brown over with his seductive Cuban accent and charming charisma. Clearly, M&M’s sends a precise message by choosing Levey as their character, and in doing so they imply that if men dress the part, look the part, and say the right things, they can have the upper hand in the battle of the sexes.

This upper hand and victory to the battle is shown when in the end Levey says the right thing, at just the right time, winning Ms. Brown over as well as the entire audience. Referring to

her brain, he asks, “Is that made of chocolate too?” (2012). Everything from the way he subtly leans toward Ms. Brown, to the slight smile that appears on his face across his succulent and full lips, to the way his eyes squint with focus and enticement, to the way his accent rings with lust, indicates that if Ms. Brown were to let him—if women would let them men—he would find out if her brain and anything else, were made of chocolate too. Levey is speaking for the rest of the men in the community: if given the chance, he would find out if Ms. Brown’s milk chocolate would indeed “melt in his mouth and not in his hands,” thus indicating the hidden portrayed innuendo of a little love play in the form of oral sex, and in this case, oral sex with a milk chocolate woman. This upper hand is achieved through his smooth talk: another stereotype of the Latin lover.

Since 1954 the “melts in your mouth, not in your hands” slogan has been associated with the M&M’s brand, and more recently with the act of oral sex amongst African-American people (Kenny, n.d.). Curtis Jackson, known as rapper 50 Cent (2012), made it very clear in his 2005 release of “Candy Shop,” a top 100 Billboard song, that he would “melt in your mouth girl, and not in your hands,” should anyone allow him to take them to the candy shop; these lyrics clearly indicating an open invitation for oral sex. It is impossible for someone familiar with the modern-day culture of today’s media not assume that Levey wanted to eat Ms. Brown’s brain. Nonetheless, after a few brief seconds Ms. Brown throws down her hands in defeat and replies, “Gosh you’re handsome!” (2012). Either Ms. Brown is sold by the idea of Levey finding out what she’s really made of or she is sold on his wooing ways. The candy is sold and a romantic hope is sold. The commercial is a wrap, and after the apparent victory, “Not your average chocolate” appears in white text, with several round candy pieces being coated with milk chocolate in the background. This final statement can be interpreted as a play on their use of

minority images. As the nation quickly becomes one in which the old majority—Caucasians—become the minority, marketers have begun to move toward more ethnically diverse portrayals in advertising. However, here the Cuban-American man is seen as simply a smooth-talker focused on sex, and the African-American woman is pictured as weak in the end, giving into his silky lip service. This is the hope M&Ms sells.

Men have long mastered the skill of being cunning, luring women into their man caves and persuading them into a night of lust with the “the language of persuasion...” and applying it to the art of multi-media has proved to be “an important media literacy skill” (Media Literacy Project (n.d.). Just ask Chili, an actress, R&B singer, and former member to the girl group TLC, who has recently aired a reality T.V. show that followed her on her pursuit for Mr. Right. Chili, a hard-shelled badass herself, ultimately ends up with her final two choices of men in season one, not the African-American introduced to her by her hired matchmaker. Was she possibly persuaded to get her swirl (a term used to identify interracial relationships) on too? Anything is possible and as Joan Evans of the Evans Marketing Group in New York said, “Any industry that sells hope is going to continue to grow” (as cited in Kavanaugh, 1986, Objectified Values section). M&M’s (2012) sold a hope to the viewers of the “One Track Mind” commercial, and as a company, they continue to grow through their strategic and modern-day marketing.

M&M’s was not only selling and promoting their newest member to their line-up of hard-shelled candy coated crew members, they were stretching their wings in order to continue to grow, selling the hope of a romantic date with that significant other, the hope for men to break through those hard exterior surfaces of women, and the a hope for women to connect to Mr. Right. Sexuality and sexual content sells, and in this case sexuality and milk chocolate goes a long way in that it hits home with the idea that despite stereotypical views of both men and

women, there's always room and time for a little flattery sprinkled with milk chocolate, and that there's nothing wrong with having a little fever for the flavor of milk chocolate, brain or otherwise. Yet overall, the commercial sells nothing but the idea that chocolate is sexy, and continued flattery of women will garner men more sex. It feeds into stereotypes of both men and women, and emphasizes those stereotypes about both African-American women and Latin men. The ad illustrates how easily we fall into the trap of accepting stereotypes, and shows society's willingness to pursue relationships based on them. Taken as a whole, it encourages a view of each of these ethnicities as only as deep as the hard-shelled surface of an M&M.

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