

**It's a Man, Man, Man World: A Closer Look at Dr. Pepper Ten**

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### **It's a Man, Man, Man World: A Closer Look at Dr. Pepper Ten**

A new product has just hit the market, and with it comes a new commercial on the airwaves. Dr. Pepper has released a new, ten-calorie version of their well-known soft drink. The latest commercial for the aforementioned beverage is, at first glance, a humorous play on the differences between men's and women's interests. However, a closer look at the advertisement will reveal that it promotes an unhealthy assumption that men and women should enjoy completely different activities without companionship from the opposite gender. The ad also promotes the idea that male activities are, to some degree, superior to female.

The commercial opens with a tough-looking man running through a jungle that looks like it could be from an Indiana Jones movie. He is carrying a laser gun yet uses his fist to destroy a robotic snake. He opens by saying, "Hey, ladies! Enjoying the film? Of course not! Because this is OUR movie!" (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:00). He is trying to outrun what appear to be Japanese ninjas. He jumps off a cliff and lands in a Jeep. While speeding through the jungle in his partner's Jeep, the actor continues, "And Dr. Pepper Ten is our soda. It's only ten manly calories but with all twenty-three flavors of Dr. Pepper" (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:15). While pouring his drink of choice into a glass, the announcer spills some of the beverage, implying that he is driving over a rough trail. As he crushes the can in his hand, he says, "It's what guys want; like this. . ." (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:18). The camera cuts to three presumably antagonistic men pursuing him on motorcycles. As he throws the can, it hits a stake in the ground, triggering a net to fall and stop the bad guys. While the Jeep screeches to a halt, the actor says, "Catchphrase!" He continues, "So you can keep the romantic comedies and lady drinks. We're good" (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:20). He faces away from the camera and drinks from another can of Dr. Pepper

Ten. The commercial closes with a can of the featured beverage shaking in front of an explosion and an announcer saying, "Dr. Pepper Ten, it's not for women" (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:28).

As noted earlier, this advertisement seems to be harmless and funny. Reading between the lines, it appears to say what no man would dare voice aloud: time with the guys is more important than time with a spouse or significant other. In his opening lines, the announcer implies the assumption that women don't like action films and that such movies are only for men to enjoy. His last line in the ad inversely implies that men do not like typically "girly movies" like romantic comedies (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:28). Digging deeper into these implications reveals the real assumption behind these statements: the male need to escape from the supposed chore of personal time with females. Fowles (1998) notes, "An appeal to the need for autonomy often co-occurs with one for the need to escape, since the desire to duck out of our social obligations, to seek rest or adventure, frequently takes the form of one-person flight" ("Need for Autonomy," para. 1). This message is reinforced when the announcer says regarding Dr. Pepper Ten, "it's what guys want. Like this. . ." (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:15). He is implying that guys only want low-calorie drinks and action movies chock full of explosions and violence rather than meaningful quality time with women. This also implies that men are unhappy spending time with the women in their lives and that Dr. Pepper Ten can fulfill their desire to be free men. Davis (1992) comments on the media myth that products can make us happy:

Happiness, satisfaction and sex appeal, just to name a few, are imminent-and available with the next consumer purchase.

Alas, even when we are wealthy, there's always something missing. We don't have the right woman or man, our car stalls at an intersection, we spend too much time

doing housework. But a whole group of images imply that we are on the verge of being happy. ("Myth 4," para. 4-5)

This ad suggests that buying Dr. Pepper Ten will make men happier.

Twice in the advertisement, the announcer uses the possessive pronoun "our" to refer to men. In the opening, he says, "this is OUR movie" and shortly afterward he states, "and [Dr. Pepper Ten] is our soda" (Dr. Pepper, 2011, 00:16). The use of "our" implies that action movies and, by consequence, the featured beverage are intended only for men, and that women should stay out of a man's business. This is stated in no uncertain terms at the end of the ad when the announcer says, "Dr. Pepper Ten, it's not for women" (Dr. P, 2011, 00:28). This is essentially telling women to keep their hands off products geared toward men. It's also telling men that it is acceptable to deny women much-needed quality time and to tell them to stay out of their business. This corresponds to another of the many appeals in advertising. As Fowles (1998) says, this preys on the human "[n]eed to dominate. This fundamental need is the craving to be powerful-perhaps omnipotent" ("The Need to Dominate" para. 1). The commercial also appeals to the male desire for guy time. Once again, Fowles notes, "In any case, the need to associate with others is widely invoked in advertising and is probably the most prevalent appeal. All sorts of goods and services are sold by linking them to our unfulfilled desires to be in good company" ("The Need for Affiliation," para. 1). In this ad, these appeals are not even subtle. They dominate the whole commercial, and imply a dominance of men and the select nature of male preference.

This commercial for Dr. Pepper Ten is, at best, a shameful mockery of men as a gender. The advertisement puts down women as inferior to other men and as unimportant in a man's life. It shows a complete lack of regard for women's needs or interests. This commercial assumes that

all men desire to be free of quality time with women and uses that assumption to sell their product. They appeal to the human need for escape by saying their product is for men only and then associate their drink with stereotypical manly activities. This underscores a theory that advertising continues to dole out to our culture: stereotypes are based in a truth that encompasses the whole of the group. While entertaining, the implications in this advertisement are dangerous. Men who take this ad to heart will soon find themselves alone with action movies and low-calorie sodas but no female companions to enrich their lives.

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