



## Walmart Tapia Bros. Ad

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

*This analysis of a Walmart ad uses the techniques and ideas described by the New Mexico Media Literacy Project.*

In this ad, Walmart performs a “fresh-over,” which is like a makeover, but fresher. Walmart takes over a small produce stand run by Tapia Bros. in Encino, California, replacing the Tapia Bros. produce with Walmart’s. Walmart then invites customers to sample the produce, and much like a real makeover, finally reveals to them that the produce was Walmart’s.

The target of this ad is people who see a value in farm-fresh produce, whom Walmart envisions as mostly white as evidenced by the customers in the ad. Walmart presents themselves as a more convenient alternative to farmer’s markets, appealing to those who shop at produce stands or would like to. The ad uses the persuasive technique of association, by attempting to connect Walmart’s produce to small-farms and farmer’s markets.

The ad begins with a white man in a plaid shirt saying, “We’re here at the famous Tapia Bros. produce stand where we switched their fruits and veggies with Walmart’s. It’s a fresh-over!” In the background, the viewer sees the back of a cart painted in bright green, yellow, and red with a sign that reads, “Tapia Bros Fresh Produce.” It appears to be on a city street.

The commercial cuts to the inside of the stand where customers, all seemingly white men and women except for one black woman, sample and discuss the produce. Walmart uses the “plain clothes” persuasive technique by including non-celebrity, casually-dressed customers, in order to cause viewers to feel that they could be those customers.

The customers in the ad exclaim things such as, “It tastes like you just picked that!” and “So far it’s about the best strawberry I’ve had this year!” By showing many different people liking the produce, Walmart uses the bandwagon technique by implying that since others like it, you should, too. Due to the FTC’s truth-in-advertising regulations, it says, in very small print on the bottom of the screen, “Real customers were shown and compensated for their time and participation.” Far from being a true, blind swap-out, this means that the customers’ comments were paid for by Walmart.

The narrator explains, “Walmart works directly with growers to give you the best quality produce they’ve ever had.” An untold story here is exactly who those growers are. By being at the produce stand of a small, local farm, Walmart implies that the growers mentioned above are small, local growers. According to the [Huffington Post](#), Walmart is attempting to incorporate local farms, hoping to sell 100% more local produce by the end of 2015. The question we ask is, “Why?”

The above [Huffington Post](#) article argues that Walmart’s produce has a reputation as hit-or-miss, often appearing not-so-fresh. Far from being an altruistic attempt to provide healthier, fresher fruits and vegetables, grocery stores make 50% profit on the sale of produce, which is

much higher than on canned fruits and vegetables. Changing public perception of their produce through this advertisement allows Walmart to have produce as a higher percentage of their proceeds, thus making a higher percentage of profit for the company.

During the big reveal, the narrator explains to the customers that the produce is from Walmart. The customers act surprised and use a persuasive technique called a testimonial. One customer says, "I know where I'll be shopping for strawberries now," endorsing the quality of Walmart's strawberries. The ad then shows a series of images of produce, visually persuading viewers. Walmart cuts from images of produce at the produce stand to an extreme-close up of a silver bowl of strawberries with water drops on it, causing viewers to further identify with the product, as if they were at home with a just-washed bowl of strawberries. Next, the ad cuts to a close-up of produce in a store, with a blue Walmart bag placed just behind the berries. This series takes the viewer from farmer's market, to eating berries at home, to buying them at Walmart, forging connections between all three things.

One of the major untold stories in this ad is that of the Tapia Bros. (not to be confused with Tapia Brothers' Co., which is a food-service distribution company). It is unclear what sort of compensation Tapia Bros. received from Walmart. The ad shows a massive corporation taking advantage of a small farm through Walmart's narrative of a surprise "fresh-over." Walmart leads the viewer to assume that this was a secret, unpaid switcheroo in the ad, regardless of the legal or financial connection between the two entities.

Kristina Tapia, who claims to be a member of the family, posted complaints about the commercial on [Youtube](#), alleging that Walmart ruined their reputation. She writes, ". . . all Walmart did was slander my family." Media Literacy Project contacted Tapia Bros. and Kristina Tapia, but did not receive any comments on the issue from them.

This ad is a great example of a massive corporation usurping a small, local business, which happens with farms quite often. According to [Farm Aid](#), most economic sectors have a concentration ratio of around 40%, meaning that the top four companies own 40% of the market. [Farm Aid states](#), "If a concentration ratio of above 40%, experts believe competition can be threatened and market abuses are more likely to occur: the higher the number, the bigger the threat." In their respective markets, the top four firms own 83.5% of the beef industry, 66% of the hog industry, and 58.5% of the broiler chicken industry. One company, Monsanto, owns 85% of the genetically engineered corn acreage in the U.S. and 91% of the soybean acreage. Due to this market domination, farm families make [90% of their income outside of the farm](#).

Tapia Bros. runs a small farm across the street from one of their well-known produce stands. When Walmart sells more local produce, what will happen to farms like Tapia Bros.? Will they lose so much business that they are forced to sell their produce to Walmart? Will Walmart pay them a fair amount for their goods?