



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Grades 8-12
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<b>Duration:</b>	45 minutes plus time for the assignment

# Marketing to Teens: Alternate Ads



This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

## Overview

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In this lesson students look at less obvious methods used by advertisers to reach consumers. Students first learn about “soft sell” ads that don’t make specific claims about a product. They then consider reasons why companies choose to use them over hard sell techniques. They will then focus specifically on why various companies might choose to use soft sell techniques as subtle forms of advertising in groups

## Learning Outcomes

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### Big ideas:

- The purpose of advertising is to try to get you to like or buy something
- Advertising uses different techniques and appeals for different products
- Advertisers use different media, approaches and techniques to reach different audiences

### Learning goals:

Students will learn:

- That not all ads make a claim about the product
- That some ad formats, such as product placement or endorsements, may not be obvious as ads
- That “soft sell” ads use different techniques than “hard sell” ads
- That “soft sell” ads are used for different products or to appeal to different audiences than “hard sell” ads

Students will be able to:

- Find examples of “soft sell” ads and identify examples of specific ad techniques
- Analyze the effectiveness of ads and speculate on their creators’ choices
- Communicate their findings to the class



## Preparation and Materials

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- Prepare to distribute the handout *Soft Sell Ads*
- Prepare to distribute the assignment sheet *Alternate Ad Audit*
- If you are giving students time in-class to work on the assignment, arrange for internet access

## Procedure

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### Guided Discussion

Begin by asking students: What is the purpose of advertising? Let students discuss this for a few minutes, making sure the idea is raised that ads are made to sell products or services.

Distribute the handout *Soft Sell Ads* and ask: what does each of these ads say about the product?

Let students discuss for a few minutes. Make sure the point is raised that very little is said about the product itself in any of these ads, and that in one case (the Instagram post at top right) you might not even know what it's an ad for if you weren't already familiar with the brand.

Now ask: What does each of these ads say about the *brand* being advertised?

- If students aren't clear on the difference between a product and a brand, explain that a *brand* is the name of a company or a group of products, like Nike or Apple, while a product is a specific thing being sold such as a particular Nike shoe or one model of iPhone.

The specific answers don't really matter, but students will likely say that the first ad is saying Vaio computers are cool (James Bond uses them), Item is fun, Doritos is progressive and Lait D'Homme is funny or cheeky (the ad is making fun of other ads that appeal to customers' masculinity.)

Explain to students that these ads are an example of *soft-selling*: advertising used to make people know and like a brand rather than telling them specific things about a product (called a *hard sell*.)

Have students turn the handout over and read through the four soft-selling techniques used in the examples:

**Product placement:** Paying to have a product featured in a TV show, movie, video game, et cetera. Product placements are usually used to make people aware of a brand (the use of Reese's Pieces in the 1982 film *E.T.* instantly made them one of the most popular candies) or as a "reminder ad" to make sure the brand is fresh in your mind the next time you're shopping. However some product placements can make a brand seem cool or appealing to a particular group when they're used by a character like James Bond.

**Endorsement:** Paying to have a real person be associated with the product. Sometimes they will actually say positive things about the product, but other times they'll just say they use it, and other times just allow themselves to be connected to it. In this example Addison Rae doesn't say anything about the product, she just wears it in the ad.

**Identity and emotion:** Connecting the brand with something that's important to the audience's identity, like patriotism or progressive causes, or with a strong emotion (like showing a happy family.) Identity ads can also tell the buyer that it's okay to buy something that wouldn't normally be part of their identity, such as selling perfume to boys by calling it "body spray." In this example Doritos associates the product with LGBTQ2S+ rights.



*Parody*: Flattering the audience by making fun of other hard or soft sell techniques. In this example Lait d'Homme makes fun of *identity* ads that appeal to buyers' sense of masculinity.

Some soft sell ads use more than one of these techniques. For example, the Lait d'Homme ad uses parody but also is an identity ad telling men that it's non unmanly to drink chocolate milk.

*Activity: Alternate Ad Audit*

Distribute the assignment sheet *Alternate Ad Audit*. Divide the class into four groups (or eight, depending on the size of the class). Assign each group one of the four soft-selling techniques (product placement, endorsement, identity appeal and parody).

Give the group to research four more examples of their soft-sell technique, then use the *Alternate Ad Audit* sheet to analyze them. Then have students share their findings with the class.

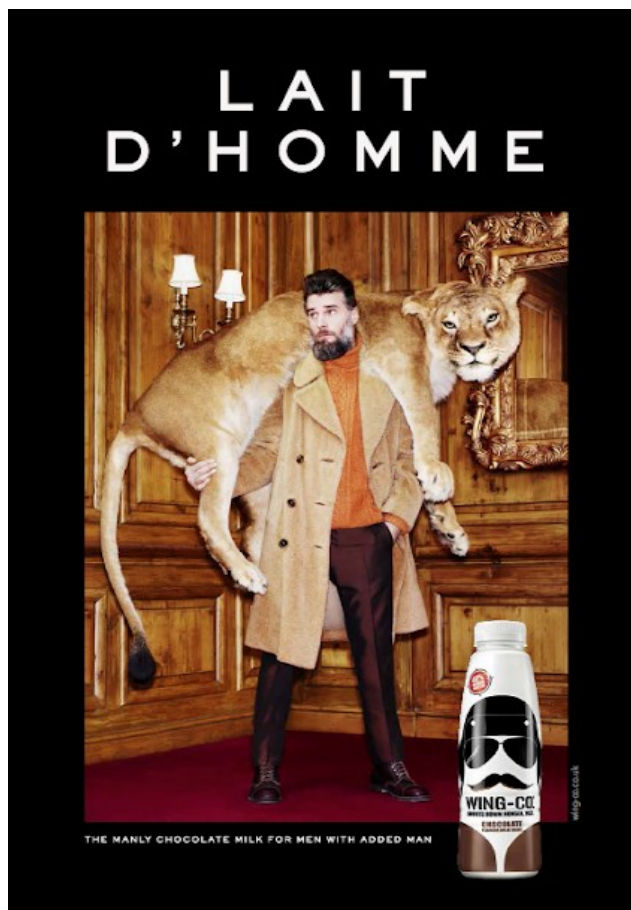
If you would like to assign individual marks, you can also have each student find and analyze one example of an ad that uses a *different* soft-selling technique than the one their group focused on.



### Soft Sell Ads



Still from the James Bond movie *Skyfall*



## Soft Sell Ads

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“Soft sell” ads use different techniques than “hard sell” ads.

Here are four of the most common:

*Product placement:* Paying to have a product featured in a TV show, movie, video game, et cetera. Product placements are usually used to make people aware of a brand (the use of Reese’s Pieces in the 1982 film *E.T.* instantly made them one of the most popular candies) or as a “reminder ad” to make sure the brand is fresh in your mind the next time you’re shopping. However some product placements can make a brand seem cool or appealing to a particular group when they’re used by a character like James Bond.

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*Identity and emotion:* Connecting the brand with something that’s important to the audience’s identity, like patriotism or progressive causes, or with a strong emotion (like showing a happy family.) Identity ads can also tell the buyer that it’s okay to buy something that wouldn’t normally be part of their identity, such as selling perfume to boys by calling it “body spray.” In this example Doritos associates the product with LGBTQ2S+ rights.

*Parody:* Flattering the audience by making fun of other hard or soft sell techniques. In this example Lait d’Homme makes fun of *identity* ads that appeal to buyers’ sense of masculinity.

Some soft sell ads use more than one of these techniques. For example, the Lait d’Homme ad uses parody but also is an identity ad telling men that it’s non unmanly to drink chocolate milk.



## Alternate Ad Audit

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For this assignment, you will focus on one of the four soft-selling techniques we have discussed in class (product placement, endorsement, identity appeal and parody).

First, find **four** ads (in any format or medium) that use that technique.

Next, answer the four questions on separate paper for **each** of those ads:

- Explain how this ad uses this technique.
- How does this ad make you think or feel about the brand?
- What audience do you think this ad is aimed at? How do you know?
- Why do you think this brand chose a soft-selling approach for this ad? Why was it a good choice to reach this audience?

Present your findings to the class.

You will be marked based on:

- Your understanding of how and why advertisers use soft sell techniques
- Your ability to find and identify ads that use a particular technique
- Your ability to analyze how ads use a particular technique and why companies or advertisers might use that technique
- Your ability to communicate your findings to the class

