2005 Third Place Critical Analysis

Later, Gator

In an ad placed in Woman’s Day magazine, Lubriderm Daily UV Lotion boasts itself as the cure-all for dry skin and defender against harmful UV-rays. Two competing figures immediately command our view: an attractive, naked woman and an alligator. At the bottom of the ad we find a catchy slogan that Lubriderm has used for years, “Later, Gator.” What is Lubriderm saying to its target consumer audience? Is a woman meant see this ad and imagine herself standing side-by-side with the socially faultless model as they smile complacently and wave goodbye to unsightly skin embodied in the form of a disgruntled alligator? After slightly more strenuous observation, one can easily discover the real psychological objective. In reality, the intended impression on the modern American woman is that she has no choice but to buy Daily UV Lotion and use it on a regular basis if she is going to be liberated from an unattractive body. This is accomplished primarily through pathos and logos incorporating a subtle stroke of ethos.

No one familiar with our culture should be surprised at the presence of a physically flawless female specimen in a magazine ad or any other form of advertisement. She is the woman every woman ought to be, the personalization of an attribute every woman ought to have. Her turned head is cut off just below the ear so as not to reveal distractingly individuating features such as her hair, lips, and, most importantly, her face. Notice also that her nails are not painted. The model is not a person; she is the embodiment of beautiful skin, “Smooth and Moisturized.” The ad relies on pathos in assuming that you, a twenty-first century American middle-class woman, want to have the beautiful skin and perfect physique that the model has. Upon seeing the ad, you are to realize, sadly, that you do not look like the model.

If the allure of beauty isn’t enough, the ad takes you even further from contentment by helping you to realize how dreadful your condition really is. The logos employed in the ad is meant to place you subconsciously into a category in which you don’t belong, and then to show you how the product is the only
hope you have of escape. The model is posed as if she were the recoiling petals of a flower defending themselves from an abrasive, hurtful desert sun. Notice the shadow on her arm and, again, her head turned away from the light. She is fragile and “Needs Protection....” The placement of her arms over her breasts not only exposes part of her perfect body while preserving the appropriateness of the ad, but also shows that she is shielding her femininity as well as her skin. She is protecting her perfect womanhood. The implication here is not that Daily UV Lotion preserves a beauty that you already possess, but that you ought to possess such a beauty that needs its protection, the perfect skin and perfect body possessed by the model. Unfortunately, even if you don’t have dry skin, you probably don’t have a perfect body, so you are not an ideal woman. But, if you are not an ideal woman, then what are you?

You are an alligator.

You don’t need protection from the sun; rather, you “bask” in it happily. Not only are you physically less than ideal, you are not even human. Between the alligator and the woman, which, in their physical proportion, occupy nearly the entirety of their respective halves of the ad, there is nothing but a white void. There is no gradient, no moderately ideal physique to choose from. By default, you are the primitive, flakyskinned reptile, again, not because your “skin is dry and flaky,” as the ad says, but because your body is not perfect. This safely places all lookers-on into the alligator category of a suggested black-and-white reality. Not only do you have flaky, damaged skin, a fact reinforced visually by the brown stripes on your tail, but, as a member of the alligator club, you are also tagged with some blatantly and intentionally non-human characteristics. The femininely pink-worded descriptions strike a sharp contrast against your green, scaly skin. An alligator “looks for anything that moves” to eat and wouldn’t think twice about “[eating a] bottle” of Lubriderm Lotion. These strange dietary habits hardly describe a modern, civilized woman. Not only are these characteristics degrading and dehumanizing, but they are the antitheses of the model’s characteristics. You obviously do not belong in your present flaky-skinned alligator class. You need to be something you presently are not. You need something to deliver you from your unnatural physical category, to give you that corporeal perfection you wish you had. Lubriderm Daily UV Lotion is the answer.
If you’re going to be the woman, you must do as she does. Here, the ad presents ethos. The model is the personalization and, therefore, the authority on beautiful skin. If you’re going to have the kind of smooth and moisturized skin that a perfect body has, you’re going to have to follow her example. Note the periods placed at the end of the descriptive sentences to illustrate that they are authoritative statements of fact. The line “Looks for a dermatologist’s approval” implies that the condition of the model’s skin, and, inductively, the factor that is suggested to have facilitated it, is approved by medical professionals, and what is that factor? What does the pretty, naked lady do to look so nice? She uses Lubriderm Daily UV Lotion. It defines her.

Again, we can examine more of the logos. How often do you suppose she uses the lotion? We can consider the title “Daily UV Lotion” in combination with the reference to dermatological approval and identify a recommendation. Like a prescription, the woman uses the lotion “daily,” and you can certainly afford to use it daily because, as is implied by the missing bottom portion of the bottle, it will never run out. Also, the lotion is not presented as a slow-acting agent that transforms alligators like you into beautiful women over a period weeks or months. As you can see by the direction in which the nozzle is pointing, the lotion is meant only for beautiful women, and, once you start using it on a daily basis, you will instantaneously become a beautiful woman, a flawless magazine model with skin worth protecting, and will remain so as long as you don’t interrupt your daily application.

Congratulations to the marketing team at Lubriderm for their brilliant use of pathos, logos, and ethos. They showed you the woman you ought to be, informed you that you were an alligator, and provided an accredited naked woman to vouch for an affordable alternative. Joining a countless line of socially arbitrative advertisements, Lubriderm accommodates women in their ever-more distinctive classes: perfect and ugly.
Skin is smooth and moisturized.

Looks for a dermatologist’s approval.

Uses Lubriderm Daily UV Lotion with Sunscreen.

SPF 15

Moisturizer & Sun Protection

Later, Gator.