



PERSUASION

How marketing is changing to reach millennial moms

[Susan Krashinsky](#) - MARKETING REPORTER

TORONTO — The Globe and Mail

Published Thursday, Apr. 17 2014, 3:58 PM EDT

Last updated Thursday, Apr. 17 2014, 5:08 PM EDT

Peanut butter may have a long shelf life, but the people who sell it are worried it's getting old.

On Monday, Kraft Canada will launch a new advertising campaign and a total rebranding of one of its most recognizable brands. Its peanut butter is a top-performing product for Kraft, but an all-important advertising target is not buying as much. Heads of households who are millennials – broadly defined as those born between 1980 and 1994 – are buying 13 per cent less peanut butter in Canada than the average consumer. (Kraft's research does not show a correlation between those slightly lower sales and concerns about peanut allergies, which makes sense, since allergies had been a factor long before the latest generation started having kids.)

For a few years now, marketers have recognized the [importance](#) of speaking to this [younger cohort](#) of digitally-savvy [people](#). But now that they are starting to have kids of their own, this consumer segment is posing a new challenge for companies that have to figure out how to communicate with a new generation of moms.

The new Kraft campaign is an attempt to do just that.

The ad shows a mother giving a teddy bear to her baby; as the baby grows, she takes her bear with her everywhere (in a nod to the target viewer, at around 12 years old, the girl is dressed in 90s-era rolled-up jean shorts and canvas shoes). Eventually, she becomes a mother herself (with bangs, and wearing skinny jeans) and her baby gets a bear as well. Ellie Goulding, a singer whose voice will be recognizable for younger viewers, provides the soundtrack.

Kraft has made the teddy bears far more central to the package design of the peanut butter, and it's a strategic move: The ad purposefully includes very few shots of the product itself or the brand name. It is focused much more on the emotional story.

"Companies that will win in the future are those that humanize their brands," Leisha Roche, senior director of marketing for grocery brands at Kraft Canada, said as she showed off a real-life model of the teddy bear at Kraft headquarters in Toronto this week. "You can't just push your brand any more."

That's because these new moms are consuming media in a digital environment more than ever before. They grew up with the Internet. According to research from communications firm Weber Shandwick, they have 3.4 social media accounts on average compared to 2.6 for moms in general. That means brands aren't competing against other ads on TV; to be heard, their messages need to be compelling enough to compete in a broader digital environment where people are posting readable, watchable, human content all the time.

Marketers have always tried to reach mothers – according to some statistics, they control up to 85 per cent of household purchasing decisions. But these younger moms are not just consuming media in a different way; they also believe advertisers are fundamentally out of touch.

In fact, 42 per cent of millennial moms believe that "most advertising and marketing is not geared to women like me," compared to 36 per cent of all moms who said so, according to a survey from communications firm Weber Shandwick, which spoke to 2,000 women in North America.

"What we've heard from millennial moms is that the bar of creativity in marketing to them is too low," said Katherine Wintch, founder and chief executive officer of The Mom Complex, a Richmond, Va.-based consulting firm that helps clients including Kellogg's, Unilever and Wal-Mart market to mothers more effectively. "It's typically a mom in a cardigan talking to the camera about her cleaning products. It's tutorial, and boring, and they react against that."

Plenty of mothers of all ages are smart enough to resent boring advertising. But the difference with millennial moms is that they are young, creative-minded, and most of all, they are vocal about their opinions. And they are savvier about using an online platform to amplify their opinions than any generation that came before them.

“They’re more likely to ignore things that don’t have an impact. They’re more likely to skip the ad,” Ms. Wintsch said. “Getting their attention is much harder.”

Kraft is not the only marketer recognizing the importance of changing that. This past holiday shopping season, Fisher-Price increased its spending on digital advertising by 50 per cent in the U.S., saying that younger moms (born in the ’80s or early ’90s) have become a greater focus for its marketing.

The Mattel Inc. toy brand’s campaign, “[Share the Joy](#),” included three online videos. But plenty of advertisers have warmed up to the promise of online videos: the difference here was that Fisher-Price offered an incentive (a \$5 coupon) for visiting the brand website where the videos were hosted, and another coupon if they shared a video with their friends.

That’s an important strategy with this demographic. According to research firm [Intel](#), 26 per cent of moms aged 18 to 34 said they would be more likely to buy something if they had seen friends recommend it online.

Like Kraft, Fisher-Price was trying to push its brand with a relatable tone that was a departure from its past advertising.

“Unlike previous Fisher-Price advertising that focused on product features, the ‘Share the Joy’ campaign introduced a more playful tone and manner we thought would resonate better with the millennial mom,” said Geoff Walker, executive vice-president of Fisher-Price global brands.

The ads were effective: In the U.S., the videos were viewed roughly three million times and 1.6 million coupons were downloaded.

“They’re the first generation to grow up using technology, and it informs everything they do,” said Diane Ridgway-Cross, executive vice-president at Montreal-based advertising firm Marketel, which has just launched a division called Marketelle, focused on [marketing to women](#).

Advertising will not just have to get better; it needs to get real. The research shows a growing demand for depictions of mothers with realistic, messy lives. Kelly Ripa [breezing](#) through her immaculate kitchen wearing heels and maintaining perfect hair while balancing a career and a family? That’s not aspirational, it’s infuriating.

Tide detergent has done a great job showing families’ lives as messy and chaotic; and that resonates with moms who have given up aspiring to perfection. (A [recent ad](#) featuring a father caring for his three daughters is a particular winner, Ms. Ridgway-Cross said, because women – not just men – are sick of seeing [dads](#) depicted as [incompetent morons](#).)

In the second phase of the peanut butter campaign this summer, Kraft is hiring anthropologists to explore the phenomenon of distracted living – and is working on social

events designed to bring people closer together.

And it will be watching the results of the campaign closely; the company will be shifting its advertising across many of its brands to better speak to millennial moms.

“Moms can make the connection between an emotional message and a brand, without you beating them over the head,” Ms. Wintsch said. “In research they tell us, ‘I want to laugh, I want to feel something.’”

Follow Susan Krashinsky on Twitter: [@susinsky](#)

Topics:

- [Kraft Foods, Inc.](#)
- [Fisher Price Inc.](#)
- [Canada](#)
- [Media](#)