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Frito-Lay Tries to Enter the Minds (and Lunch Bags) of Women

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SORRY, men: Baked Lay's are no longer meant for you.

Frito-Lay, a division of [PepsiCo](#), is overhauling all of its calorie-conscious snacks to make them appeal to women, including the baked versions of Lay's, Fritos, Ruffles, Doritos, Cheetos and Tostitos; Smartfood; Flat Earth; and its 100-calorie packages of snacks.



It has researched women's feelings about snacking and guilt to produce new packaging, new flavors and a new ad campaign, all in an effort to get women to eat Frito-Lay snacks.

Women are snacking more than men, but are not eating as many Frito-Lay snacks, said Jill Nykoliation, the president of Juniper Park, the advertising agency that handled the Frito-Lay women's project. "So if it's, you're snacking two times as much, but you're not snacking with us, why, and what can we do for you?"

Frito-Lay is also trying to replicate its success with

its good-for-you message on its SunChips brand, which is one of its fastest-growing, said Gannon Jones, the vice president for portfolio marketing at Frito-Lay North America.

Sales at Frito-Lay are strong: Frito-Lay North America posted 8 percent revenue growth and 7 percent profit growth in 2008. However, men's growth in salty snacks is far outpacing women's, Mr. Jones said.

According to Frito-Lay research, women snack only 14 percent of the time on salty foods. Women snack 25 percent of the time on sweet foods; the other 61 percent of snacking includes drinks, fruits and vegetables.

To figure out how to sell Frito's salty snacks to women, Juniper Park, a BBDO agency within the Omnicom Group, turned to pop neurology.

Neurology used for advertising purposes, called neuromarketing, has gained a following among some marketers. Many use it to test their ads, using research firms like [NeuroFocus](#) to show an ad to consumers and see the level of brain response.

Juniper Park used neuromarketing in a slightly different way. Ms. Nykoliation began by researching how women's brains compared with men's, so the firm could adjust the marketing accordingly. Her research suggested that the communication center in women's brains was more developed, leading her to infer that women could process ads with more complexity and more pieces of information.

A memory and emotional center, the hippocampus, was proportionally larger in women, so Ms. Nykoliation concluded that women would look for characters they could empathize with.

And research Ms. Nykoliati read linked the anterior cingulate cortex, which processes decision-making and was larger in women, to feelings of guilt. (Experts differ on how directly functions or feelings are associated with various parts of the brain.) Ms. Nykoliati then asked [NeuroFocus](#) to review her assumptions and, as Juniper Park developed ads, to test the ads to verify that women liked them.

She was especially interested by the guilt factor. Frito-Lay and Juniper Park asked about 100 women to keep journals about their lives for about two weeks. According to their logs, the women felt guilty about quite a lot, whether it was snacking, not seeing their children enough, or not spending enough time with their husbands.

Though Frito-Lay had often tried advertising snacks as guilt-free, this led to the conclusion that “we’re not going to alleviate her guilt,” Ms. Nykoliati said. “This is something in her life. So the question for us was, how do we not trip her guilt?”

Part of the strategy was to follow the success of SunChips by toning down the packaging and showing off healthy ingredients in the snacks.

“She wants a reminder that she’s eating something better for her,” Mr. Jones said.

Baked Lay’s will no longer be in a shiny yellow bag, but in a matte beige bag that displays pictures of the ingredients like spices or ranch dressing. Some of the new Frito-Lay packaging is in stores already.

Since just under half of Baked Lay’s consumers are men — the single-serving sizes sell well at Subway — Frito-Lay did not want to make the packaging overly girly.

With Smartfood, though, it did. Since it acquired Smartfood in 1989, Frito-Lay has sold the white-powder-covered popcorn in black bags. It will continue to sell that version, though it will soon change the name to something like SmartCorn, Mr. Jones said.

Meanwhile, it is introducing a new line of sweet, lower-calorie popcorn for women under the Smartfood brand in flavors like cranberry-almond. These also come in beige bags, and the packages trumpet characteristics like fiber and [calcium](#) and show ingredients like wheat or almonds.

In 2010 and later, Frito-Lay may introduce other snacks, like trail mixes, under the Smartfood brand, Mr. Jones said.

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At the grocery store, Frito-Lay will pull all of its women-friendly snacks together at the end of the aisle where possible, Mr. Jones said. Often, he said, the chip aisle is disorganized and unappealing to women.

SunChips, Flat Earth and the 100-calorie packs will also be part of these displays.

Aliza Freud, the chief executive of SheSpeaks, a women’s market-research firm, said packaging made for women made sense.

“The obvious is what’s insulting to women,” she said, like a pink package or something highlighting [calories](#). But an overall design meant to attract women, she said, was smart. “You want a package that when women are walking by it in the aisle of the supermarket, they take notice.”

The accompanying advertising campaign, “Only in a Woman’s World,” has already begun running teaser spots. Frito-Lay will introduce television, print and online advertising in early March, and webisodes will begin running at [AWomansWorld.com](#), a site that Frito-Lay and Juniper Park created, on Sunday.

The campaign features four cartoon women who are “fab, funny, fearlessly female,” as the Web site puts it, who talk about exercising, eating and men — something of an animated “Sex and the City.” In a print ad for Frito-Lay, two women are surveying a Baked Lay’s bag. “These things are the best invention since the push-up bra,” one woman says. The other, admiring her bra-enhanced chest, responds, “I wouldn’t go that far.”

“Some of this is the tape you play in your head,” Ms. Nykoliati said. “Someone always goes, ‘Listen to yourself.’”

In one of the webisodes, two of the women stand with a swimsuit saleswoman, who is reviewing a chart of what bikini works on women with different body types — a trope familiar to readers of women’s magazine summer issues.

“Where’s the one that takes a middle-aged mom with some unwanted bulges and a chest that’s seen perkier days and makes her look like Cindy Crawford?” a character asks.

The saleswoman removes her glasses and says, dryly, “I’m not seeing that one.”