

Yummy mummies: The clamor of glamour in advertising to mothers.

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Yummy Mummies: The Clamor of Glamour in Advertising to Mothers

Stephanie O'Donohoe (bio)

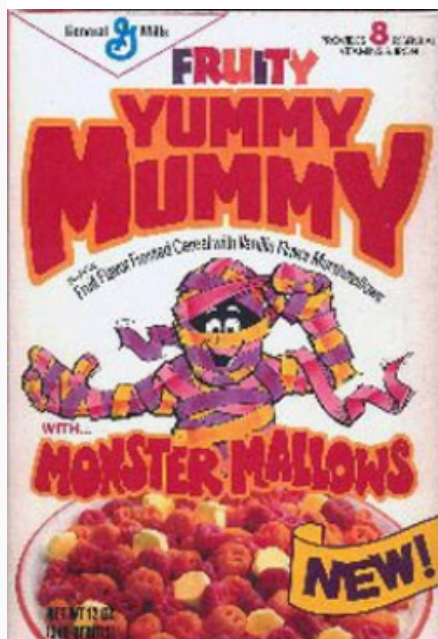
Introduction

“That’s a great deal to make one word mean,” Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

“When I make a word do a lot of work like that”, said Humpty Dumpty, “I always pay it extra.”

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*,
1872

By Humpty Dumpty’s reckoning, “yummy” has earned a fortune through its association with “mummy.” Putting aside its previous incarnation as a General Mills breakfast cereal brand, the term Yummy Mummy is currently working overtime and internationally. Connoting attractive, well-groomed, and well-dressed mothers, the term has lent its name to a plethora of websites, books, newspaper articles, television shows, celebrities, and companies, and it has offered a platform for advertising agencies, nonprofit organizations, and bloggers. It also appears to have opened up another front in the “mommy wars” between mothers aspiring to Yummy Mummyhood and those casting aspersions on it.



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Figure 1.
Yummy Mummy cereal box

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yummy_Mummy

Such varied and heated use suggests that the term has something significant to say about motherhood in contemporary (and, particularly Western, middle-class) culture. Advertising is supremely well-positioned to “recycle cultural models and references back through the networks of social interactions.”¹ The advertising industry has not been slow to appropriate the Yummy Mummy into its repertoire of representations and target markets. The phenomenon has received little academic attention. Thus, this paper explores representations of the Yummy Mummy in contemporary cultural and commercial discourse. Although it is written from a British perspective, the paper also draws on North American material that echoes and reinforces many of the themes identified in this paper.

Yummy Mummies: grooming and consuming

Just like any other fad, scratch the surface of the YM phenomenon and you won't find anything beyond. But then surface, or how you look, is what it's all about.²

There seems to be a great deal of activity beneath the surface of this phenomenon, however, since the term and its connotations have become a site for acrimonious, even sanctimonious, exchanges between mothers. Nonetheless, there is some consensus that at its most basic level, the term refers to an attractive, confident, and well-groomed or expectant mother, a woman who “manages to glide through pregnancy and motherhood with the style and composure she possessed pre-conception,”³ or “a mother, of any age, who does not identify with the traditional, dowdy image of motherhood.”⁴

Although the precise origins of the term's post-General Mills incarnation are not clear, it emerged with a new generation of celebrities who retained their glamour (and regained their figures) after giving birth. Breitbart and Ebner's recent book, *Hollywood, Interrupted*, refers to such

slimmed-down stars posing for photographs as “a coming-out ritual now customary for postpartum sex symbols showing they still have it.”⁵ In Canada, Erica Ehm, a media personality and mother, presents a TV show called *Yummy Mummy* and runs a website by the same name.



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Figure 2.

A Canadian celebrity Yummy Mummy

Source: <http://www.ericahm.com/index.cfm?pid=15538>

In the UK, Sadie Frost, Kate Moss, and Liz Hurley have long been referred to as Yummy Mummies, as have a host of other models, actresses, and celebrities. Each year, one of these celebrities is named “Britain’s Yummiest Mummy,” a title based on a poll conducted for the childcare supplies company Avent. The poll is part of the company’s support for Yummy Mummy Week, a fundraising event for CLIC Sargent, a children’s cancer charity. The Yummiest Mummy accolade went to Victoria Beckham in 2006, and to Kate Winslett in 2005, with the results of this poll to gaining international exposure.⁶

Celebrity or not, a Yummy Mummy’s style and composure appear to

come at a price, with many media commentators associating her with an affluent, high-maintenance, high-consumption lifestyle. Several reasons have been advanced for the recent rise of this particular “Mommy myth,” some revolving around the aspirations of professional women in their thirties...



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