Sample Genre Analysis: Food
Labels (Abbreviated Sample)

Advanced Exposition

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How Milk and Milk Alternatives Utilize Their Food Labels

The writing genre of food labels is used daily by anyone that goes to the grocery store to buy food. It doesn't matter who you are, how old you are, or what your background is, if you shop at a grocery store then you are bound to run across all sorts of food labels. Food labels are said to exist to educate potential buyers about a specific product, and they are meant to catch people's attention in an attempt for more sales. Regardless of what the product is, its label is there to catch consumers'attention with an aesthetically pleasing format and enticing claims on the front of the packaging before they can turn the product to look over the true nutritional facts. Some products even have a product description next to the nutritional facts label in order to draw more attention away from it.Ever since the FDA changed requirements for the nutritional facts, such as making the font for calories and serving sizes larger, companies have had to up their marketing strategies on their food labels. Many consumers are now health conscious, which has resulted in food products designingtheir packaging in a way that convinces people that their product is healthy. I will be focusing onfood labels for milk and milk alternatives, especially due to the wide array of audiences for this particular food label genre.

Cow's milk has always been an essential addition to people's diets due to its versatility, taste, and health benefits. Whole milk is prided on its abundance of vital minerals and vitamins, and for being rich with high-quality protein. However, there are varying reasons why one cannot consumeor chooses to not consume cow's milk, such as milk allergies, lactose intolerance, dietary restrictions (veganism, ethical, or health reasons), and potential health risks (possibility of contaminants like antibiotics and pesticides). Due to all of these reasons, milk alternatives began to come about and gained popularity, but their food labels played and

still play a big role in their ever-growing sales. Milk alternatives had to convince different audiences, including avid milk drinkers,why their products are better than cow's milk. Once popularity with milk alternatives began, and conversations were brought up about which alternative is "better," more and more alternatives appeared and cow's milk producers had to start addressing their competition on their labels. The aesthetics of the packaging and the claims found on the front and back of the milk and milk alternative labels play a huge role in how they attract certain customers and maintain sales. Food labels tend to add claims that are misleading, which I will be paying attention to while rhetoricallyanalyzing these labels.

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The next milk alternative, I want to analyze Almond Breeze's unsweetened, vanilla almond milk. The front of this packaging makes sure to mention it is made by Blue Diamond, a brand that sells bags of whole almonds, to likely gain their almond-buying customers or convince people that they are more legitimate than others since they are using their own almonds. They also have their calories displayed on the front, 30 calories per serving, and underneath their, "unsweetened vanilla" they mention that there are additional natural flavors. Just as Silk's soy milk, they state thatthey are dairy free and non-GMO verified. As I turn to the back of the packaging, my assumption about their marketing is correct since it emphasizes how their "family of California almond growers" have been growing almonds for over 100 years and that "the best almonds make the bestalmond milk." They are suggesting that their almonds are grown by the same families, generationafter generation, and since they have cared for their almonds for this long then their almond milk isjust as delicious as their almonds. This wording is not only pulling those who have tried and enjoy eating their almonds, but also entices others to try their almond milk since it is assumed that people who grow almonds must produce the best almond milk. On another side of the packaging, it listsall of the things that isn't in their almond milk, such as dairy, soy, gluten, peanuts, carrageenan, casein, lactose, cholesterol, and no added sugar. Anyone looking at this packaging will likely assume that all of these things are

bad for you, even if they have no idea what the substance or chemical is. It does contain certain essential vitamins, 50% more calcium than cow's milk, and is made with "real" California almonds. I'm not sure who would wonder if this product was made of fake almonds if it already shows almonds in the ingredients list. This all comes to show how much the food labels push the "healthy" agenda and that their almond milk is made of real and natural ingredients, which must mean that it is good for you. They are appealing towards people who havecertain allergies and sensitivities, while also emphasizing how tasty their product is.

Califia Farms coconut milk, which is stated to be a coconut and water blend, is one example of the popular coconut milk alternative due to its sweetness and creaminess. This particular brand places most of their health claims on the front of the packaging, in a neat and simple layout. They assure that it isn't completely coconut in case people are nervous about its fat content. In a slightly larger font towards the top, it says that there's 45 calories per serving, and along the rest of the frontpackaging it says it's free of dairy, soy, gluten, added sugar, and carrageenan with 50% more calcium than milk. All of these being on the front shows that they are reaching audiences that arehealth conscious but also want something that tastes good, which many coconut lovers would assume about this product. It also has a little banner that says "go coconuts" under the brand's logo,which is a woman's face with what seems to be a flower crown. The "go coconuts" is likely thereto be clever and grab people's attention. The logo is supposed to be of the mythical Queen Califia, which is their logo because she is the namesake of their state of California, but I believe it could also be there to entice customers that like Starbucks. The queen's face is almost identical to that of the Starbucks logo and she is also wearing a crown, which could possibly trick Starbucks lovers into buying it. On the back, it states that it's vegan, kosher, non-GMO verified and BPA free. It seems that this brand displays most of their healthy claims on the front to grab as many people asthey can and leaves the rest of their claims on the back in case someone has more concerns abouttheir product.

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After analyzing milk and milk alternative packaging labels, I've noticed a lot of consistencies intheir tactics to reach certain audiences. Some put their value in how many calories the milk product has, the milk's flavor, the amount of protein and nutrients it has, or its lack of certain ingredients (like things that are either deemed "bad" for you or things people may be allergic to). However, all of these milks and milk alternatives share common ground when it comes to pushing their product's"naturalness" and healthiness in comparison to others. What they place on the front of their product's label is there to compensate for what is shown on the back. Silk places its value on its closeness to cow's milk due to its protein and promotion of health benefits. Meanwhile, Almond Breeze's almond milk put more emphasis on its low calories per serving and its use of "real California almonds." Califia coconut milk wanted to highly emphasize health benefits, even thoughit has no protein and uses something "fatty" like coconut products. Then, Oatly oat milk went thehonest, "we hold ourselves accountable" and taste good route. Lactaid 2% prides itself on its lackof lactose, reduced fat, and calcium while Organic Valley whole milk based most of its labeling on the farm's supposed good practices with the cows and their lack of harmful chemicals and antibiotics. It is safe to say that all of these milk and milk alternative labels have the intention ofdisplaying their product's positives to overshadow the negatives in the nutrition labels in order to capture the consumer from the get-go. They have a specific agenda and stick to it for the purposeof having the most possible sales.

When it comes to reading through these food labels, specifically milk and milk alternative labels, one has to ask themselves what they value first. It is easy to get lost in these elaborate food labels that do their best to convince certain audiences that their product is the best, but it makes the search even harder if you don't even know what you want. If you are an avid milk drinker who isn't negatively affected by lactose and values the fair treatment of cows, then maybe Organic Valley is for you (assuming they are being honest about this). If you have a soy allergy, are sensitive to lactose and want protein in your milk, then you might want to get Lactaid or Oatly, depending on which you prefer. Maybe you don't care for cow's milk and

solely want a tasty addition to your coffee, therefore Califia's coconut milk might work great. Everything depends onwhat you value in the product you want to consume, so read the labels carefully, from front to back, in order to find what your perfect milk match is without getting distracted by their visuals andpurposely enticing claims.