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Sabra Hummus Super Bowl Commercial and the Labour that Went into it

In February of 2020, Sabra Dipping Company aired its first Super Bowl commercial. By including 19 cameos in their ad, Sabra gained access to and indirectly employed the vast fanbase behind each celebrity to bolster circulation and create a widespread dialogue on social media.

Sabra pays each of the celebrities to be in the commercial but really what they are paying for is all that each celebrity has already put into growing their platform and fame. For example, Sabra took advantage of the large community Brittany Tomlinson, also known as Kombucha Girl, accumulated on social networks after her viral success on TikTok. And Mel B's cameo surely benefited Sabra due to the lasting fanbase surrounding the Spice Girls. Rather than establish a unique demographic through innovative writing or production Sabra's investment went towards the spectacle of celebrity and access to predisposed fanbases. In other words, instead of creating an audience from scratch, Sabra is paying celebrities for access to audiences they've already created after years of labour. In this way, modern advertising depends on both the paid labour of production as well as the vitality of media platforms.

As celebrities labour to maintain influence, fans and followers labour to a different degree. Gillespie claims that "platforms are empty software shells", and that the "creative and social labour of users fills those shells" (Gillespie, 129). He argues that the economic worth of social networks "is overwhelmingly built upon this labour that users give away without financial compensation". Just as social media companies rely on the user labour of posting, liking and commenting to attract other users and thus make the social media site valuable, celebrities depend on similar unpaid labour of their fans to cement their names in power. It is the unpaid labour of fans that gives a celebrity their fame in the first place. Unpaid labour of media users

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can include posting about a specific celebrity, reposting content made by a celebrity which further expands the celebrity's initial audience, and general discussions, in person or online, about a celebrity. By completing all of these seemingly insignificant tasks, users of all communities are dispersing content and growing the celebrities audiences for them at no cost. So, Sabra is depending on the labour of the 19 celebrities which created their fanbases, and by extension the unpaid labour of the fans which truly gave them their platform which is now being used to promote Sarbra's hummus.

Sabra was also able to use the uncompensated labour of social media users to promote their product. Specifically, we can look to the Twitter campaign introduced by Sabra as a feature of their commercial. According to Nielsen's study, the 2020 Super Bowl had an average of 98.2 million viewers (Nielsen). This is the ad's potential television outreach—but it does not represent the vast population of prospective viewers, fans, and internet users that circulated the ad via social media. Pepsico, one of the owning companies of Sabra, has recently shifted focus to the Gen Z market; largely due to teenagers' active social media presence (Vizard). To Sabra's benefit, TikTok star Charli D'Amelio, along with other featured celebrities, announced the ad on Twitter. Every time a fan likes, replies or retweets a post regarding Charli's Sabra content, a chain reaction of users are able to associate the product with her name. The ad also caught traction with a more general, varied demographic. Major Twitter accounts, such as Vineyard Vines, further celebrated the ad on Twitter to a more diverse community. In this way, viewers of all backgrounds and interests contributed unpaid labour by simply interacting with the ad or related content. The Twitter campaign also consisted of a catchy, interactive hashtag, '#howImmus', that further incited engagement among fans and television viewers alike.

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Therefore, Sabra's campaign reached those who happened to be looking at the screen when their commercial aired during the Super Bowl, but was more widely publicized and memorialized in the realm of social media. Sabra's virality is indebted to the fans who propagated their idol's appearance, neutral users who viewed the ad as it was circulated, and those who shared how they 'mmus.

Overall, for the success of their commercial, Sabra depends on labour they are paying the 19 celebrities to do (be in the commercial), the labour that has gone into making each celebrity famous, the unpaid labour of fans that gave each celebrity their platform, and the unpaid labour of fans and social media users who used #HowImmus and brought attention to the commercial online.

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