

# **‘Lady Doritos’ Don’t Actually Exist, But the Outrage Against It Teaches Us an Important Lesson About Making Up Our Own Minds**



The Twittersphere yesterday erupted with outrage at the news: Pepsi was releasing “Lady Doritos,” a quieter, purse-friendly chip for women.

It’s the type of mockable, scoffable idea that’s perfect for Twitter. And to be fair, consumer shelves have seen their share of half-brained, pink washed products designed to capture women’s dollars, often at a premium. Bic Pens for Her come to mind. As do earplugs for women or tape for girls.

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A “Doritos for women” seemed particular off-base emerging when it did, weeks after the second Women’s March and in an era of Time’s Up and #MeToo. Anger online came fast and furious, with social media reacting against what it thought was the latest symptom of a society that still had outdated, precious ideas about what women wanted and needed.

*Good news, ladies. We got a female Colonel Sanders and Doritos that don't crunch, so feminism is cancelled. We've achieved equality.*

*– OhNoSheTwitnt (@OhNoSheTwitnt) February 5, 2018*

To some, the very idea of Lady Doritos was exhausting or even upsetting. Busy Phillips, the actress and influencer, called the chips “triggering” during an Instagram Live.

*.@Doritos we've been through enough this year.*

*– Bess Kalb (@bessbell) February 5, 2018*

To be sure, society still has lots of things to fix and lots of outdated ideas about women. But Lady Doritos, as a product, doesn’t actually exist.

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The hubbub started when a quote from a Freakonomics podcast episode featuring Pepsi CEO Indra Nooyi was misunderstood. In the podcast, the CEO mentioned a slew of ways that Pepsi is researching how users eat and use snacks of all kinds. Nooyi, you may or may not know, has been instrumental in diversifying Pepsi’s snack portfolio to include “Better for you” and “Good for you” offerings, products with whole grains and nuts. But, as the podcast interview explained, the company is interested

in all the ways people consume snacks, including where they carry them after the snack leaves a pantry.

Here's Nooyi's full quote from the podcast.

*"You know, when you eat out of a flex bag – you know, one of our single serve bags – especially as you watch a lot of the young guys eat the chips, they love their Doritos, and they lick their fingers with great glee, and when they reach the bottom of the bag they pour the little broken pieces into their mouth, because they don't want to lose that taste of the flavor, and the broken chips in the bottom. You know, women I think would love to do the same, but they don't. They don't like to crunch too loudly in public. And, you know, they don't lick their fingers generously and they don't like to pour the little broken pieces and the flavor into their mouth."*

She added:

*"It's not a male and female as much as 'are there snacks for women that can be designed and packaged differently?' And yes, we are looking at it, and we're getting ready to launch a bunch of them soon. For women, you know, low-crunch, the full taste profile, you know, not have so much of the flavor stick on the fingers, and how can you put it in a purse? Because women love to carry a snack in their purse."*

In the same podcast, Nooyi talked about how Pepsi needed to rename a Sobe beverage flavor "Liquid Liposuction" to "Sobe Lean" after Pepsi acquired the company, knowing that people held Pepsi to a different standard than an edgy independent food company.

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The company tried hard to set the record straight yesterday. There was a simple, straightforward tweet:

*We already have Doritos for women – they're called Doritos,*

*and they're loved by millions.*

*– Doritos (@Doritos) February 6, 2018*

And there was a statement by a spokeswoman, tagged onto the already widely shared stories. “The reporting on a specific Doritos product for female consumers is inaccurate,” the statement read, in part. “At the same time, we know needs and preferences continue to evolve and we’re always looking for new ways to engage and delight our consumers.”

Some on social media caught on to the misunderstanding and tried to chime in, explaining the interview itself was an empowering one about a female CEO with two advanced degrees who used to play cricket as well as lead guitar in an all-woman band.

*Other things Nooyi discusses in the interview: Growing up in India, being CEO in the middle of the financial crisis, the importance of young people sticking with STEM, and the way she drastically retooled the company to add a nutritional component to the brand.*

*– Caroline Siede (@CarolineSiede) February 5, 2018*

But these more nuanced perspectives, such as how Nooyi did her job as CEO, or the reality of how all products are designed for a variety of market segments, continued to be lost in the excitement online. created by those who seem to not to have read past the headlines they’d tweeted. Just minutes before I wrote this sentence, a full day after most of the corrections had been issued, folks on social were still reacting to “Lady Doritos,” and with fresh outrage.

*Please tell me Lady Doritos is not a real thing.*

*Tell me that at a time when women have had to watch an overqualified female presidential candidate lose to a joke, and they are fighting for equality and the #ERA – please tell me @Doritos is not STUPID enough to market that.*

*– PoliTeach ?? (@PoliTeach) February 6, 2018*

*I'm terrified for the rest of 2018 because women really want better healthcare and equal pay but so far we've just gotten Reba in KFC commercials and lady Doritos*

*– ali (@alibakerevans) February 6, 2018*

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As crises go, this is a minor one. But it says a lot about how we talk online. And it's a reminder of social media's power in spreading a dominant message and how that conversation – one free of nuance – can go awry. More than anything, it's another example to all of us to rethink a 'quick take' or a craft a witty reaction, since we risk misplacing our outrage. Better to put that time into reading more or listening, not just reacting, and strengthening the very important skill of widening our points of view and making up our own minds.

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