An Examination of Methods Used in truth Campaign Advertisements

Monea Kerr
Western Washington University

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An Examination of Methods Used in the truth® Campaign Advertisements

Research Question:
What methods have anti-tobacco television advertisements, such as those of the truth® campaign, utilized in order to convince smokers to quit or non-smokers to never smoke?

WHY THE truth® CAMPAIGN?
• Unique - born out of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement of 1998
• Personal interest: was disturbed by the commercials I would see on TV as a teen with a mother who smokes

METHOD AND THEORY
• Textual analysis of advertisements
• Semiotic approach: signs create meaning - can be both intentional and unintended

DOMAIN
• The campaign targets 15- to 21-year olds
• 17 advertisements examined – retrieved from YouTube
• One from each year: 2000 to 2016

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS
• All of the ads examined had an education factor
• 88% used dramatic demonstration and 65% included audience reaction
• 35% used vulgar humor
• 18% used fear and 12% used disgust
• 12% used fun humor

EDUCATION

AUDIENCE REACTION

VULGAR HUMOR

DISCUSSION
• Dramatic demonstration and audience reaction: at-home audiences can picture themselves in the situation or feel validated in their emotions
• Education: a new fact for every advertisement
  To unveil true colors of Big Tobacco
  To promote education on health consequences
• Activism – encourages youth to “enlist”
  War metaphor positions youth generation in a battle with Big Tobacco

CONCLUSION
• At the heart of any campaign is the ability to put together signs in a creative way in order for the message to be received effectively by audiences. Meaning is then created through social convention
• Limitations: finding advertisements and knowing what year they were from – citing YouTube
• Further research could conduct a comparison of another anti-tobacco campaign to the truth® campaign.
• A further study could conduct a focus group of high school and college students to analyze advertisements

Methods Used in truth® Advertisements from 2000 to 2016 via Youtube

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