

Recognizing Types of Propaganda in Advertising

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Title: Recognizing Types of Propaganda in Advertising

Overview and Rationale

To help students recognize the various types of propaganda so that they will be better able to recognize propaganda in its various forms. Designed for an intermediate journalism class of mainly 11th and 12th grade students, the target audience will be a class of roughly 25 students of varied academic ability, race, gender, and cultural background.

Generative Topics

Generative Objects

Goals for Understanding

Performances of Understanding and Timeline

This unit will take one week or five teaching days. The first two days involve teacher-led discussions identifying the seven most common propaganda techniques

- The purpose of the propaganda
- Examples of seven different types of propaganda in print publications and in broadcast operations.
- Essential Questions
 - What is propaganda?
 - What are the goals of propaganda?
 - What are the seven types of propaganda?
- Critical Engagement Questions
 - How does propaganda affect its audience?
 - What responsibilities do newspapers have to their readers?
 - How does recognizing propaganda devices make you a better consumer and journalist?

used in advertising. The next day involves looking at magazines and newspapers and identifying three ads that exemplify each of the seven different types of propaganda. During the fourth day, students will work in groups and create an advertisement using one propaganda techniques. On day five, students will present their advertisements to the class and have the class identify the propaganda technique demonstrated.

Activities

Activity 1: Define propaganda and its seven types. Identify the benefit that recognizing propaganda techniques affords.

- Define Propaganda: The art of persuasion.
 - It is the spreading of ideas, information or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause or a person.
 - Propaganda is intended to make us accept or approve something without looking closely at the evidence.
 - Most of the propaganda devices utilize emotion and avoid critical thinking.
- Seven Types of Propaganda. The seven most common techniques of propaganda used in advertising are:
 - Testimonial
 - Glittering Generalities
 - Transfer
 - Plain Folks
 - Bandwagon
 - Name Calling
 - Card Stacking
- Your deeper understanding of propaganda devices can:
 - Save you lots of money.
 - Assist you in making better political decisions.
 - Help you distinguish between fact and opinion.
 - Aid you in persuading others.

Activity 2: Identify the seven types of propaganda using radio/television and magazine/newspaper advertising examples.



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Lesson Plans

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- **Card Stacking: The strategy of showing the product's best features, telling half-truths, and omitting or lying about its potential problems.**
 - In using this technique, facts are Selected and presented which most effectively strengthen and authenticate the point of view of the propagandist. It includes the collection of all available material pertaining to a subject and the Selection of that material which most effectively supports the propaganda line.
 - Card stacking, case making, and censorship are all forms of Selection. Success or failure depends on how successful the propagandist is in Selecting facts or "cards and presenting or "stacking" them.
 - Example:
 - Drug manufacturers do this frequently in ads in which they skim over the possible harmful side effects of their products. Facts are Selected and presented which most effectively strengthen and authenticate the point of view of the propagandist.
- **Testimonial: The use of well-known, respected people to endorse a product or service.**
 - Testimonial places the official sanction of a respected person or authority on a product. This is done in an effort to cause the target audience to identify itself with the authority or to accept the authority's opinions and beliefs as its own.
 - In testimonial ads, a person, either a celebrity or a representative of "everyman," praises the product or service. In the case of the everyman approach, the idea is to have consumers relate to the person describing his or her experience with the product of service. If it fills their need, it should fill the consumer's need.
 - For celebrity testimonials, the intent is to associate the product or service with a famous person. If the famous person believes the product is acceptable, then the idea is that consumers will believe the product is OK.
 - Examples:
 - Jane Russell: "I am delighted with Springboard products and have felt much better since I started using them."
 - Oscar Meyer created an ad for its food products using George Foreman, a recognizable boxer, as the celebrity providing a testimonial for the product. Michael Jordan is the most commonly used sports figure for testimonials.
 - Tiger Woods lends his name to Nike.
 - Testimonials are intensely emotionally appealing words so closely associated with highly valued concepts and beliefs that they carry conviction without supporting information or reason.
- **Glittering Generalities: The act of referring to words or ideas that evoke a positive emotional response from an audience. Virtue words are often used.**
 - Glittering generalities are intensely emotionally appealing words so closely associated with highly valued concepts and beliefs that they carry conviction without supporting information or reason.
 - They appeal to such emotions as love of country, home; desire for peace, freedom, glory, honor, etc.
 - They ask for approval without examination of the reason. Though the words and phrases are vague and suggest different things to different people, their connotation is always favorable.
 - Examples:
 - Food products will quickly label their foods as low fat hinting that they are more healthy, when, in fact, the product might be high in calories.
 - Advertisers will sometimes give an incomplete comparison like "better tasting." Better tasting than what? Spam? Dirt?
 - Cascade claims that their detergent will leave your dishes virtually spotless. In other words, there will be some spots.
 - Politicians will associate themselves with concepts which have positive connotations. For example, George W. Bush claimed to have a compassionate conservatism as opposed to more negative reference to the conservative right.
 - Virtue Words:
 - Virtually, More, New
 - Low Fat, Better, Pride
 - Honor, Peace, Happiness
 - Prosperity, Freedom
 - Ask yourself:
 - What does the virtue word really mean?
 - Does the idea in question have a legitimate connection with the real meaning of the word?
 - Is an idea that does not serve my best interests being sold to me merely though its being given a name I like?
 - Leaving the virtue word out of consideration, what are the merits of the idea itself?
- **Transfer: The act of relating something or someone we like or respect with a product. Symbols are constantly used in this form of propaganda.**
 - Common Symbols
 - The flag represents the nation.
 - Uncle Sam represents a consensus of public opinion.
 - A cross represents Christianity.
 - The Star of David represents the Jewish faith.
 - Transfer devices can be used both for and against causes and ideas.
 - Examples:
 - On TV commercials, actors in white lab coats tell us that Brand X cold medicine is better than Brand Y.
 - During the 2000 campaign, Gov. George Bush used the American flag as part of his logo.

- During the 2000 campaign, Vice President Al Gore used the colors, stars and stripes of the flag for his logo.
- Ask yourself:
 - In the most simple and concrete terms, what is the proposal of the speaker?
 - What is the meaning of the thing from which the propagandist is seeking to transfer authority, sanction and prestige?
 - Is there any legitimate connection between the proposal of the advertiser and the revered thing, person or institution?
 - Leaving the propagandistic trick out of the picture, what are the merits of the proposal viewed alone?
 - Does this carry over the authority, sanction and prestige of something we respect and revere to something the speaker would have us accept?
- **Plain Folks: The use of everyday people to sell a product or service. Speakers and ads appear to make the person to be "one of the people."**
 - Designed to win the confidence of the audience by communicating in the common manner and style of the audience.
 - Propagandists use ordinary language and mannerisms (and clothes in face-to-face and audiovisual communications) in attempting to identify their point of view with that of the average person.
 - With the plain folks device, the propagandist can win the confidence of persons who resent or distrust foreign sounding, intellectual speech, words, or mannerisms.
 - Examples:
 - America's recent presidents have all been millionaires, but they have gone to great lengths to present themselves as ordinary citizens.
 - Bill Clinton eats at McDonalds.
 - Ronald Reagan chops wood.
 - Jimmy Carter was an humble peanut farmer.
 - Ask yourself:
 - What are his ideas worth when separated from his personality?
 - What could he be trying to cover up with the plain folks approach?
 - What are the facts?
- **Bandwagon: Bandwagon attempts to persuade the target audience to take a course of action "everyone else is taking." "Join the crowd." This technique reinforces people's natural desire to be on the winning side.**
 - The basic idea behind the bandwagon approach is just that, "getting on the bandwagon." The propagandist puts forth the idea that everyone is doing something, or everyone supports this person/cause, so you should too.
 - The bandwagon approach appeals to the conformist in all of us: No one wants to be left out of what is perceived to be a popular trend.
 - Examples
 - McDonalds touts that billions have been served.
 - World War II posters encouraged others to buy bonds by showing how many other people had bought one.
 - Ask yourself:
 - What is this propagandist's program?
 - What is the evidence for and against the program?
 - Regardless of the fact that others are supporting this program, should I support it?
 - Does the program serve or undermine my individual and collective interests?
 - This technique reinforces people's natural desire to be on the winning side.
- **Name calling: The use of names that evoke fear or hatred in the viewer. The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol.**
- The most obvious type of name calling involved "bad names." For example:
 - Fascist
 - Pig
 - Yuppie Scum
 - Bum
- A more subtle form of name-calling involves words or phrases that are Selected because they possess a negative charge. For example
 - Social engineering
 - Radical
 - Stingy
 - Counter-culture
- Examples:
 - A [poster](#) that is a play on World War II posters. Communism is equated with downloading MP3s.
 - Bill Gates has also been subject to a little name calling.
- Ask yourself:

- What does the name mean?
 - Does the idea in question have a legitimate connection with the real meaning of the name?
 - Is an idea that serves my best interests being dismissed through giving it a name I don't like?
 - Leaving the name out of consideration, what are the merits of the idea itself?
- The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol.

Activity Three

- Divide class into groups and have them go through newspapers and magazines looking for examples of the seven types of propaganda. Share with the larger class.

Activity Four

- Working in groups and using a PowerPoint presentation, have students develop their own advertisement using propaganda. Present product to entire class.

Assessment

Students will be graded in groups based on the quality of their advertisement and their ability to defend it, as well as their participation in class discussions throughout the unit.

Materials

- Link to satiric MP3-as-Communism poster at <http://modernhumorist.com/mh/0004/propaganda/mp3.cfm>

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