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St. Augustine Campus**

Faculty of Humanities and Education

**COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS
COMS 2002**

GROUP PROJECT

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TITLE OF THESIS:

**COMMUNICATION TEXT: ANTI-AIDS VIDEO CAMPAIGN,
FEATURED ON SYNERGY TV.**







In 2003, Trinidad and Tobago cable programming welcomed an innovative locally-based channel, Synergy TV. Synergy TV claims to be the first music-oriented channel, with programming targeted to the youth - teens and young adults. They took part in promoting AIDS campaigns like *What's Your Position?* and *Got It? Get It* with ads regularly aired during commercial breaks on the station. The audience of Synergy TV is perceived by society to be the ones who engage in sexual activity most frequently and are at most risk for the disease. Given the United Nations' definition of youth as "persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years" (Youth and the United Nations), aligned with CARICOM's statistics stating that 50% of HIV/AIDS cases contracted the disease between these ages (CARICOM Youth), the perception may have merit. Perhaps more importantly for Synergy, the audience is a perfect commodity to the promoters of the anti-AIDS campaigns.

The advertisement that was chosen to be analysed and recreated was aired on Synergy TV as part of a similar campaign in the fight against AIDS and the promotion of safe-sex practices. The advertisement was set among three young Jamaican men in the streets, which showed resonance of the 'ghetto' parts of the Jamaica. The goal in the advertisement is for one of the young men to obtain a condom and protect himself from any sexually transmitted diseases. In analysing the ad and the effectiveness of its message, feminism in media, cultivation theory and rhetorical analysis were primarily applied.



According to Gallagher, “The question of how women are ‘spoken for’ or ‘spoken about’ is at the heart of the feminist critique of media context and its implication in the construction of gender” (25). In the particular ad that was analysed, the female voice is totally muted as the opinion, voice, or even face of women are not represented at all. The campaign perhaps works on the perception that men are more forward with regards to sexuality, and possibly assumes that women lack sexual appetite and thus are not concerned with condoms. Further, women’s sexual identity is discarded as the ad implies that their group is not important enough to be represented in it. How women are spoken for through the silencing of their group in the campaign speaks volumes. Despite young Caribbean women being 2.5 times more likely to contract HIV/AIDS than their male counterpart (Women, HIV and AIDS), the ad seemingly shows that only men are to be protected from contracting the disease. Within the ad itself, women are also insulted and it is implied that they sleep around, as one of the men says “Tell me something all them girls you with, who them use to deal before you? Or what, you don’t think you can catch this AIDS ting?”, without regard for the possibility that he has spread HIV/AIDS to other women. Throughout the ad, the men are made the centre of attention, and their sexual protection is the only one considered. The women involved are simply a faceless, nameless sexual exploit that may potentially carry diseases. Considering Synergy’s target audience is certain to include females, the ad needs to reflect the thoughts, concerns and needs of the female audience member as well.



Analysing the advertisement, using the cultivation theory – a theory which emphasizes the effect that television and the media has on the behaviour of the audience (Chandler) - a number of societal stereotypes may have been enforced or reinforced. Firstly, the perception that Jamaica is a hyper-sexual society, as already helped by the lyrics of music that comes from the popular Jamaican dancehall culture, is forwarded by the advertisement depicting the three characters as not only sexually active, but actively involved with multiple partners. This is evidenced by the characters mentioning “all them girls you with”. During the ad, the character on the car’s partnership with multiple ladies was never chastised, but his failure to wear a condom was, again promoting the norms that the advertisement campaign wants the viewers to believe, and thus be influenced to. Although the idea of glorifying or condoning multiple partners may not have been intended, the ad does portray it as part of the reality. By not speaking against it, or showing alternative lifestyles, a member of the audience could believe that this is the only way society functions.

Secondly, the only gender and demographic representation in the advertisement was done from the standpoint of, and seemingly directed to, the heterosexual afro-descending suburban male. This may create the idea in the audience that sexual responsibility lies in the hands of this particular group. All other groups who do not fit in with the demographic of the characters displayed seemingly need not be concerned with safe sex practices. This implies that either sexually transmitted diseases do not affect



them, or their lifestyle is not one that the audience will be concerned with. In doing this, they create a world that only consists of the persons of this particular demographic, as pertains to this ad, and can risk alienating the audience who do not fall into the window. This alienated audience may then ignore any message the ad is attempting to give as the world portrayed by the ad is not the one they operate and exist in, though they may believe the world exists.

The cultivation theory as applied to this advertisement also has the effect of creating the positive idea that practicing safe sex is a good way to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly, as the character on the car was made to wonder about the status of the girls she he was with. As the audience is drawn into this world, they understand the consequences of the lifestyle the character on the lives, and see how the other two deal with the situation. As the opinions of the other males in the ad outnumber his, their view becomes the prevailing societal view in the eyes of the audience.

Finally, the advertisement cultivates, perhaps most importantly, the idea that sexually transmitted diseases are out there and people not only need to, but are also taking steps to prevent themselves from catching them. The audience may, as a result, take these same measures to protect themselves, as they believe the world portrayed in the media is a reflection the world they exist in (Chandler). Again though, despite the message it intends to send, with the ad being packaged in a very particular demographic



that does not represent various genders, classes, races, ages, or other variances, that message may be lost. Audience members who do not conform to the group will feel that the campaign simply is not for them, and thus, what it says does not relate to their circumstance. In this regard, the cultivation theory will not hold as the audience does not believe what the media portrays in the wider sense. In a strict sense, they don't believe it applies to them. Our adjusted ad attempted to correct a number of these shortcomings by including persons of various races and genders and also offering their perspective.

Aristotle's Rhetoric was used to analyse the ad campaign specifically focusing on three aspects which were the persuasive value of the text, the context and the audience. Ethos, logos and pathos were utilized to determine how effective the ad was when it came to these criteria. Firstly the audience was intended to be both Jamaica and the wider English speaking Caribbean, judging from the fact that it was aired on Synergy TV which is a Caribbean television channel. Ethos is based largely on the credibility of the persons sending the message (Edlund). Synergy TV is a credible source in general, however when it comes to the topic of HIV and AIDS they cannot be considered experts, and further there is a perception that the party lifestyle that is promoted on their network through some of the music that is aired can affect their moral authority. Despite this, Synergy TV constantly promotes HIV/AIDS awareness and other responsible-lifestyle campaigns, such as those against drinking and driving, which allow Synergy TV to have the public trust on these campaigns.



Logos, or the logic of the ad, is quite solid. The idea that the man can, as his companion informed him, catch AIDS without the use of protection was a logical argument which, when combined with the idea told to the third man that protection is important made an effective argument for the message they were trying to send. The message is clearly protection helps in the fight against AIDS. The entire enthymeme on which the ad relies is the major premise of ‘Protection prevents AIDS’, therefore the minor premise for the audience will be ‘I use protection”, and thus the conclusion, ‘I will prevent AIDS.’ Logically, this argument also makes sense, and the idea that using protection prevents AIDS is reinforced many times, with the character on the car questioning his status due to lack of protection, and the other characters’ insistence on protection.

In terms of the persuasive value of the ad – its pathos – it may sadly only have an effect on the particular demographic of the heterosexual working class Jamaican male, as this demographic is the only one really represented by the ad campaign. Those who seek acceptance from their peers, or emulate the lifestyle may also feel that emotional link, as the ad plays to this respect as one man hands the other a condom, and following their dialogue, they depart with “respect eh fadda.” However, the ads shortcomings ignore all the other groups within the Caribbean context who are affected by HIV and AIDS, either directly or indirectly. Women, persons of other sexual orientations, persons from different Caribbean countries, and others are ignored.



While other groups may very well relate to the ad, and find an emotional connection, the content of the ad and the way it is delivered makes it unlikely. There were times when the audience from other Caribbean countries may have been unable to understand exactly what the ad saying because of the strong Jamaican accents. The ad also ignores the entire female demographic by excluding them from the ad. The woman involved in the relationship with the man is never mentioned while the only reference to women is in the line “Tell me something all dem girls you with you know who dem use to deal before you”.

One can now understand the Jamaican ad popularized by the Caribbean television station Synergy TV, as it was analysed through the lens of feminism in media, cultivation theory and rhetorical analysis. It spoke of the representation of gender inequality, the enforcing and reinforcing of Jamaican stereotypes (i.e. hyper-sexuality, heterosexuality), the spreading of a positive idea and the persuasive value of the text, the context and the audience. It is through this analysis that viewers are better able to understand the goal and shortcomings of the AIDS advertisement, and thus we were able to recreate the advertisement.

Through our attempt at recreating the ad, we aimed to address many of the shortcomings that the original text contained, with specific reference to the representation of different genders, races, classes, sexual orientations and sexual choices (through abstinence).



Despite what we believe to be improvements, there were still a number of challenges that were unable to be overcome given the time constraints, and scope of the project. Firstly, it was impossible to represent and appeal to every possible group of people at risk for HIV/AIDS in one ad, and still maintain a reasonable length of ad to air on television. Secondly, in appealing to a homosexual/bisexual audience, certain heterosexual or homophobic viewers may be alienated. Thirdly, there were technical and logistical challenges that may impact the quality, effectiveness and delivery of the ad. In correcting these errors, recommendations include creating multiple ads which appeal to a variety of audiences, as well as position these ads on a number of networks and medium that appeal to a broader section of the population.



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