

What is the media and where did it come from?

The media is something that is present in almost everyone's lives. Over the past century the media has changed in leaps and bounds. Not only have we become bombarded with new types of media we have new technologies which are now becoming media specific. It is these technologies which influence your lives each day, often without you knowing about it.

But before we take a look at media today we should look at where media came from. Take a moment and think about the word "media", what does it mean to you? What comes to mind?

See if any of the items listed below had come to mind:

Newspapers, Magazines, Television, Radio, the internet, Paintings, Cartoons, Films, Posters, Pamphlets, Billboards...even Bumper Stickers, they are all forms of media.

Media is something that's always been around, ever since the dawn of time. So lets take a look at the History of Media Handout.

These forms of media often have different meanings attached to them for each individual. Some people associate various types of media with different activities. For example, the internet with research, or magazines with visiting the doctors office. And all these things have something in common, can you guess what it is? It's simple, they are all mediums that are used to inform people in one way or another.

Everyday, people are exposed to some of these media forms. Whether they do it deliberately is another matter. Some people *choose* to watch television, but they probably do not choose to watch television advertisements. For many of us the media is something that is just there, so we end up watching it, or listening to it or reading it ... By doing so we are often indirectly informed and influenced through that form of media.

Have you ever found yourself at the bus stop reading the advertisements on the bus shelter, or on the bus for that matter? Have you ever found yourself reading an advertisement as you were drying your hands in a public bathroom or listening to a radio jingle on your drive to school? More likely than not, these advertisements have a subtle influence on you. Ask yourself this question: Have you ever bought a product because you watched or listened to an advertisement? Perhaps, or perhaps not, but there is a good chance that you've purchased a product that is advertised.

Media is a tool which is often used to influence your decisions and your ideas. The people who control the media content are selling you ideas. It is up to you to learn about how the media manipulates its' audiences. You may not realize that every advertisement, news broadcast and television show is designed to make you think and feel in a particular way, however, they are and this can either be a negative or a positive experience.

Remember when you watch the news, you never get the full story...what you get is highlights, bits and pieces and it's the same with advertisements. Certain products do not give you the whole picture, although it may seem that way. For example: Some juice products contain up to 30% cooking oil, but it is never mentioned in the advertisements. Cigarette advertisements usually don't picture individuals in poor health due to smoking. And clothing advertisements don't usually tell you that their products may have been made in sweatshops. Advertising is the most common form of media exposure and as you read on you'll begin to discover that advertising is a multi billion dollar industry for a reason. It's because advertisements are well thought out, and they use psychological selling methods. Let's take a more in depth look in the next section...

Advertising

As mentioned earlier, advertisement constitutes the largest amount of media exposure per capita. Seems unreal right? All you have to do is pick up a magazine and see that more than 50% of it's content is advertisements. This may seem bad, however, the media, isn't all bad; it does protect us from things we do not need to see (such as "ultra-violence").

What you do have to remember is that the media is a powerful tool, **and it is being used on you!** Teenagers are more susceptible to advertising than any other group of people on the planet (especially in North America). Teens are more concerned about what they, listen to, watch, wear and even eat. Teenagers need to feel accepted and advertising is one form of media which preys on teenagers. The Media markets to teenagers, here's how

How do marketers reach teens?

Marketers reach teens in two ways, first by establishing brand loyalty at an early age; and secondly by preying on teenage banes and popular movements and fads. As you read earlier advertisements can be found in the following places: bathrooms, on the net, bus shelters, bike racks, food packaging (fast food packaging, cereal boxes), matchbooks, billboards, coasters, under the ice at hockey games, on people's clothes, on shopping carts, on busses...virtually everywhere.

Can you think of a public place where there are no ads? Take a look at the following statements, do any of these apply to you?

- "I can ignore most advertising"
- "Songs from commercials stick in my head"
- "I have made a conscious effort to look like someone specific I have seen in an ad."
- "Some ads make me feel bad about myself or inadequate"
- I bought a product because it's what my friends or family always buys

If advertisers reach you earlier on in life there is a greater chance of you being loyal to only one brand of a particular product. Just ask yourself, are you a Pepsi or a Coke person, do you prefer Nike shoes or Reebok? Unlike adults in the working world, teenagers often do not have to pay for food, utilities, insurance, essential clothing, et cetera. This means that the money you have is usually spent on whatever products you desire to purchase, and this is done through marketing.

What do you need to know about marketing?

Companies have to market their products in order to make a profit, and if they are successful, that profit may very well have come from your wallet. What you need to know is simple:

If you are informed about a particular product then there is a greater chance that you will be buying something that you will actually need, or something of worthwhile

quality. Advertisers are like vampires which feed off of your wallet, so you have to be weary of them. Advertisements can come in many different formats and may be presented in such a way that you are more likely to remember the product being advertised. Marketing uses media to sell you it's "things" and they have a large bag of tricks...it is up to you to read through the lines.

All you have to do is ask simple questions, and more importantly use common sense. If you are observant you will see that advertisers use common ploys to sell their products. Look at the following examples, you'll probably find that they are familiar:

- How can a product be both new and improved? If it is new then it can't be improved because it didn't exist before.
- Four out of five doctors recommend this cough medicine. The advertisement doesn't say how many doctors were interviewed, or even what type of doctors they were. What if they had only asked 5 doctors? It would make the statistic invalid.
- A one time limited offer. Quite often these offers are used at seasonal intervals when sales are low or to move out old stock for new stock, you will often find car dealerships having these sorts of "offers".
- "You will save up to half"! Half of what? This sort of advertisement never discloses all of the necessary information to make an informed decision...

THE PROCESS OF CREATING ADVERTISEMENTS

How the pros create ads:

Television ads are made carefully. A typical ad campaign costs 20 - 40 million dollars. The following would be a likely scenario for the actual construction process for a major advertisement made for a big corporation.

by Bob McCannon, Executive Director, New Mexico Media Literacy Project

1. The idea is brainstormed by agency "creative" people, and rough drawings and script are made.
2. The idea is discussed with advertising agency account managers; improvements are suggested.
3. Improved idea, drawings and script are presented to client. Client rejects or accepts with suggestions.
4. Computer made story boards are generated and discussed within agency.
5. The new version is shown to the client; more suggestions are given.
6. Agency creates hand-drawn storyboards, scene descriptions, actor descriptions, and script.
7. Actors are hired; backgrounds made; locations selected; costume, lighting,

sound and technical experts hired.

8. Rehearsals begin; modifications are discussed. Computer graphics begin.

9. All scenes are shot numerous times on film with full crews.

10. Scenes are mixed into a master rough draft in a studio.

11. The draft is reviewed at the agency; its impact is assessed; changes may be made.

12. The draft is discussed with client; changes may be made.

13. The draft is shown to focus groups, then discussed; changes may be made.

14. The client reviews final version agency; changes may be made.

15. The ad is test marketed.

16. Polls are taken, discussed, and changes may be made.

17. Time slots are purchased carefully for markets, target audiences, times and cost.

18. Ads begin running. Polls constantly assess.

19. The client monitors sales. Changes may be made.

20. The length of the ad's run is constantly assessed in terms of sales.

NOTE: EVERY SCENE has been discussed by highly paid and trained people at least TEN TIMES! Nothing is accidental. Students need to know that they cannot spend as much time and effort in deconstruction as the ad agency spent in constructing the ad, but discussion and decision making shouldn't be made in haste.

Assignment 1 - Creating your own video advertisement

With all the information you have read you will be required to create your own advertisement based on those principles, and by following the steps that are laid out for you below (which include specific advertising techniques) you should be able to create your own commercials for a product that you are either familiar with or invent.

Or

You may create a PSA.

Public service announcements (PSAs) educate citizens about issues that are difficult to deal with: homelessness, pollution, teen pregnancy, smoking and alcoholism. PSAs give citizens information about these issues so they can think about them and take positive action.

Step 1: Selecting a topic

First you need to explain what it is that you are planning to advertise. Write up a brief summary of what you are intending to do, **for example:**

1. I will be advertising a new chewing gum product called Beefychewz. This advertisement will be targeted towards people who enjoy beef jerky and the fruity flavor of chewing gum. The gum will have a cherry bubble gum outside and a beef jerky center.

Step 2: Researching your topic

2. To research your topic you may want to view other media sources which advertise similar products, or comment about one's you've seen or heard. By doing this you will be able to compare your advertising idea to existing ones. This will also give you an idea of what target audience your product appeals to and thus you can improve on ideas which you are already familiar.

However, the most effective method of research is to create a consumer survey. **This will be the best method of research for you.** Create a survey for your peers and collect the data that it provides. Compile the data into either a chart or written interpretation of the information (my survey found that, 53% of people liked the idea of beefychewz...). Keep your survey short (but not too short) and keep the questions simple. Make sure that the questions you ask can be answered with a Yes or a No or a single sentence.

What kind of questions should I ask?

Ask your consumer audience questions: For example: ask whether or not they are interested in purchasing similar products to the one you are advertising (i.e. gum or beef jerky).

Ask them what flavors they prefer, what amount of money they are willing to spend, what they like or dislike about the packaging, ask if they would try a free sample of your product...*and* make sure your questions have to do with the type of product your are selling.

After you have compiled your data, you can begin to write the script for your advertisement.

Step 3: Creating a script

You don't need a big budget to launch a powerful media campaign. All you need is a message you believe in and creativity. Being passionate about your product will make you money if you can effectively advertise it and having a good script is a necessity in that regard.

Step 4 - STAGE 1: WRITING THE AD

Gather together the most creative people in your group. Elect a moderator and then brainstorm. Your first step is to clearly identify the audience your message should target. You may want to use an existing TV ad as a model. Think of ads that you like; write them down and explain to your group what it is that you like about them. Is it the message, the music, the style the visual appeal, think about what makes ads good and what makes them bad.

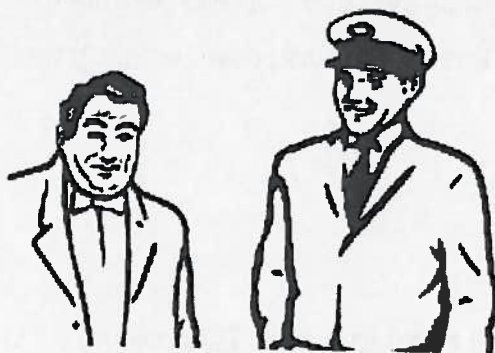
Write your script ideas using the standard two-column format: Visual and Audio (**see Appendix B for an example**). Share your ideas on your peers. If you can reduce your message to a single concept, one strong visual metaphor and one powerful slogan-- then the hardest part is done. Avoid expensive ideas that require feature film techniques. A beer commercial set in a crowded pub, for example, involves substantial production costs. The simplest ideas

are almost always the best: a spokesperson speaking directly to the camera in an appropriate setting, a single image that slowly unfolds with sparse voice-over. You don't need to be slick--slickness is often a mask for insincerity. You don't need hype--hype costs money. An honest and sincere presentation of your position is your best tactic. However, this may all seem very easy in theory and that's why we need to take a closer look at the psychology behind advertising and the media. Psychology in advertising sells products and that's a fact. **Turn to Appendix A** for a complete list of Psychological tactics used by advertisers. Read through these techniques and select one for your group's advertisement. Then write out your advertisement, remember to include all video and audio cues in your ad.

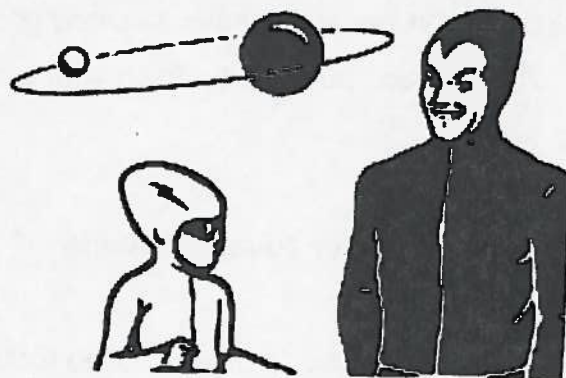
Step 5: Creating a story board:

Creating a story board requires very little art work and can be created by anyone. A storyboard provides a visual example or "snapshots" of what will be happening in a video production. Essentially it is a comic book version of your film. It includes: action, camera angles, special fx, sound and many other things. A storyboard gives the on site crew, actors and post-production crew an idea of what the director is intending to do with his/her video.

Here is a brief example (your actual storyboard may be many pages in length):



Introduction of Beefychewz
by the spokesman



He claims that Beefychewz are out
of this world.

Make sure that everyone in your group gets a copy of the storyboard and script this way everyone will be involved.

Step 6: PRODUCING THE AD

You have a strong concept. Everyone in your group has read the script and viewed the storyboard and given you positive and negative feedback. Now you need to tape your ad and get it aired. Assign tasks to each member of the group. You will need actors, camera operators, a director and an editor. Once everyone has been assigned a job your production should flow smoothly and there shouldn't be any confusion regarding who's doing what.

Step 7: Rough video draft for pre-editing

Now you will have to start putting things together. First you will need to get your equipment and start filming. Of course you will have to familiarize yourself with the camcorder and other equipment before you go out to take some footage. You will also watch a short video which explains the basics of video production.

After you have learned how to use the camcorder and learned about video techniques, you will need to record your story, or in this case your advertisement. Once you have gathered a variety of footage (with different angles, distances et cetera) you will be able to finalize your video. If you have followed your script and storyboard you will be able to gather all the video you need to finish your project, and this means you don't waste time editing.

Step 6: Finalizing your advertisements

Once you have gathered all of your video footage you will need to edit it. This means you will have to familiarize yourself with the editing computer program. During editing you will need to split your original footage into pieces. Then you will have to use

transitions to make each part of your footage flow together. You may also want to add a commentary or musical soundtrack to your video. Once you have finished your video you may put it onto DVD.

Appendix A - Advertising Psychology at work

Media makers – particularly advertisers -- use a number of identifiable techniques to inform and persuade media consumers. You can use your understanding of these techniques as specific tools for decoding and creating media messages. Here are examples and comments of how advertisers use different techniques to help promote their products and how advertisers target a specific audience:

1. **Symbols** can be words, designs, places, ideas, music, etc., symbolizing tradition, nationalism, power, religion, sex, family or any concept with emotional content. In media, people and things often symbolize some larger concept.
2. **Hyperbole** is exaggeration or "hype". (For example, "The greatest automobile advance of the century!") Ads often use "glittering generalities" -- impressivesounding language that is nonetheless vague and meaningless. This technique seeks to impress the target and make him/her more susceptible to the sales pitch.
3. **Fear**. Media often try to make us afraid that if we don't do or buy something, something bad could happen to us, our families and friends, or our country.
4. **Scapegoating** is a powerful technique that blames many problems on one person, group, race, religion, etc.
5. **Humor** is a powerful tool of persuasion. If you can make people laugh, you can persuade them.

6. **The Big Lie.** Most people want to believe what they see. Lies work -- on cereal boxes, in ads and on television news. According to Adolf Hitler, one of the 20th century's most dangerous propagandists, people are more suspicious of a small lie than a big one.

7. **Testimonials** use famous people or respected institutions to sell a person, idea or product. They need have nothing in common.

8. **Repetition** drives the message home many times. Even unpleasant ads work if they are repeated enough to pound their message into our skulls.

9. **Führerprinzip** (a term coined by Nazi propaganda chief Josef Goebbels) means "leadership principle," or charisma. Be firm, bold, and strong; have dramatic confidence; and frequently, combine this appeal with the "plain folks" technique. It's amazingly effective.

10. **Name calling** or **ad hominem** is frequently used in media. It can be direct or delicately indirect. Audiences love it. Our violent, aggressive, sexualized media teaches us from an early age to love to hear dirt. (Just tune in to daytime talk radio or TV!)¹

11. **Flattery** is based on the idea that if you make people feel good, they are more likely to buy your product. We like people who like us, and we tend to believe people we like. (We're sure that someone as brilliant as yourself will easily understand this technique!)

12. **Bribery** seems to give us something desirable: "Buy one, get one free." This technique plays on people's acquisitiveness and greed. Unfortunately, there is

¹ *Media Literacy for Health* -
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no free lunch.

13. **Diverslon** seems to tackle a problem or issue, but then throws in an emotional *non sequitur* or distraction.

14. **Straw man** builds up an illogical (or deliberately damaged) idea and presents it as something that one's opponent supports or represents. Knocking down the straw man reduces the opponent and builds up the attacker.

15. **Denial** is used to escape responsibility for saying something unpopular. It can be either direct or indirect. A politician who says, "I won't bring up my opponent's problems with the IRS," has just brought up the issue.

16. **Card-stacking** provides a false context, telling only part of the story, to give a misleading impression. Read the critics' quotations in any movie ad; only the compliments are included.

17. **Bandwagon** insists that "everyone is doing it." It plays upon feelings of loneliness and isolation. In the United States, with our incredible addiction to sports, this technique is often accompanied by the concept of being on "the winning team."

18. **Plain folks.** Many advertisers and politicians promote themselves or their products as being of humble origins, common, one of the gals/guys. Unfortunately, this technique reinforces anti-intellectualism, implying that to be "common" is unquestionably good.

19. **Nostalgia.** People tend to forget the bad parts of the past, and remember the good. A nostalgic setting usually gives a product a better image.

20. **Warm & fuzzy.** Using sentimental images (especially families, kids and

animals) to sell products.

21. **Beautiful people.** Using good-looking models in ads to suggest we'll look like the models if we buy the product. How many times have you seen this one used?

22. **Simple solutions.** Avoid complexities, unless you're talking to intellectuals. Attach many problems to one simple solution.²

23. **Scientific evidence** uses the paraphernalia of science (charts, graphs, etc.) to "prove" something that's often bogus.

24. **Maybe.** Exaggerated or outrageous claims are commonly preceded by "maybe", "might", or "could." You could win a million dollars!

25. **Group dynamics** replaces the weakness of the individual with the strength of the group. Live audiences, rallies, pep rallies...

26. **Rhetorical questions** get the target to say "yes" to preliminary questions, in order to build agreement and trust before the sales pitch.

27. **Timing** can be as simple as planning your sell for when your target is tired. In sophisticated propaganda, timing is the organization of multiple techniques in a pattern or "strategy" which increases the emotional impact of the sell.

Storyboard Name

Client	Spot	Title	Job #



Shot 1:
Music:

Shot 2:
SFX:

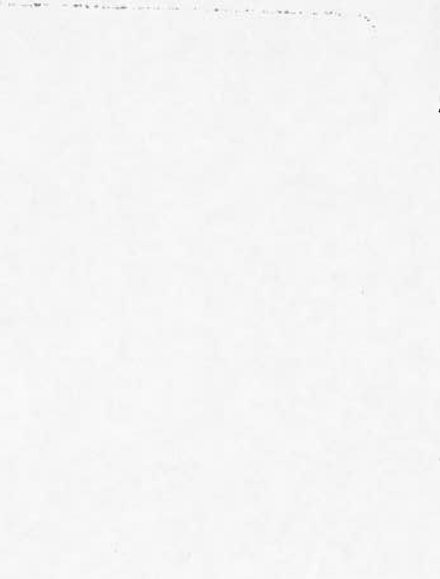
Shot 3:
Music:



Shot 4:
Music:



Shot 5:
SFX:



Shot 6:
Music:



Actual Production