

The Truth Campaign

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Introduction

This paper analyzes the Truth campaign. By examining the focus, target audience, benefits, and the channels this campaign uses to understand what the Truth campaign is all about. The Truth campaign is a national campaign aimed towards eliminating the number of teens who smoke in the United States. It launched in 1998 when the teen smoking rate was 23%. This campaign encourages teens to avoid tobacco and take a stance against the tobacco industry through media content. Truth mainly focuses on tobacco but also the opioid epidemic and how it is a crisis. This campaign is asking people to start learning about and being pro-health, stop teen smoking and drug use, and continue to help you and others quit this addiction and expose big tobacco's lies and manipulation.

Health Topic Description and Audience Analysis

The health topic of this campaign is focused on preventing tobacco use for the youth and young adults. Truth also launched a prevention campaign against opioids to help young people understand the dangers of opioid abuse. The people who stand to benefit from the recommended behaviors of educating, preventing, and helping yourself and others with tobacco or opioid use is the youth. Specifically ages 12 to 17 years old and young adults who are ages 18 to 24 years old (Youth.Gov, n.d). The benefits of these teens and young adults taking an active stance in the Truth campaign include: rejecting tobacco use, becoming the generation that rebelled against the marketing tactics of big tobacco corporations, and saving lives.

The Truth campaign stands for changing the youth's attitudes and beliefs towards tobacco use and the tobacco industry in order to reduce tobacco use. The types of people involved in this behavior are those who do not smoke, are against tobacco use, and know or are interested in

learning about the lies of big tobacco corporations. The reasons these types of people are involved is because they may not live in one of the 12 tobacco states or they do and want to create change, they are young and cannot purchase tobacco products, have a strong financial status at home, have good mental health, and are educated. The types of people who aren't involved are those who continue to smoke, get others to start smoking, and fall for the marketing tactics of big tobacco companies. The reasons these people are likely not involved is because they do live in one of the 12 tobacco states, have low income, are of the age to purchase tobacco products, have poor mental health, and are not educated or have a college degree. These types of people could also have grown up with tobacco use within the family or surround themselves with people who do use tobacco. The factors related to the health issue and recommended behaviors that are most important to those who do smoke are the wide accessibility of tobacco, the possible mental escape it brings, the social acceptability depending on the user's social circle, and the effort/energy it takes to quit. For those who do not smoke the cost of smoking both financially, physically, socially, and mentally are too expensive of a risk for them. Their health, social status, and career are more important to them.

The target audience for the Truth campaign is the youth and young adults in the United States. The reasons for the youth being involved, ages 12 to 17, is because they are more vulnerable to make ill informed choices with tobacco. Considering they are from Gen Z, Truth wants to inspire this new generation to prevent teens from starting to smoke. This generation has the capability to end smoking for good because it is the youngest group of people and these individuals are the most susceptible to make poor choices and fall for the tactics of the tobacco industry. Some populations are at a higher risk of using tobacco in the US like Alabama,

Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and the other tobacco states. These 12 tobacco states have a lower income, spend less on public health, have poor mental health, and there are a lower percentage of residents with a college degree (Radcliffe, 2017). The youth and young adults in these areas are especially targeted because of their demographics. This campaign also targets young adults, ages 18 to 24, because they are an important secondary audience.

A typical member of the audience is a 16 year old male from the US. Let's say his name is Lincoln. Lincoln is African American, just received his driver's license, and lives in Selema, Alabama. Lincoln is currently a junior in high school, and lives in one of the poorest towns in Alabama. He lives with his mom, dad, older brother and his household earns only \$24,200 annually. Lincoln is friends with his brother's friend group who are all 22 years old. They all use tobacco products daily, and convinced Lincoln to start smoking his sophomore year, but lately Lincoln is wondering if he should quit. Although Lincoln wants to be seen as cool, and one of the guys, he doesn't know if smoking is safe to do. Since Lincoln is trying to manage being a high school student and working full time at a local grocery store so he can save enough money to move out when he turns 18, he doesn't know if he should continue smoking since it is costly.

Lincoln believes the benefits of starting to smoke are that he is seen as a true member of his friend group and that he fits in. The major barrier he faces is that if he continues to smoke it will take away money he is saving to move out because smoking is costly and addictive. When he was 10 years old, his uncle died from oral cancer because he was a smoker for 30 years. This also is a mental barrier for Lincoln because he knows his uncle told him to never start smoking. Lincoln's media diet consists of scrolling through Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube in his free time. He also watches TV at night after work.

The health belief model influences the target audience's behaviors, or specifically Lincoln's behaviors, related to smoking. This model believes we base our behavior choices on five considerations: we will be adversely affected if we don't change, the adverse effects will be considerable, behavior change will be effective in preventing the undesired outcome, the effort and cost of preventive behavior is worthwhile, and we are moved to action by an eye opening occurrence. For the target audience of this campaign, the youth, this model could allow them to stop smoking or never start smoking. For instance, Lincoln knows he won't have enough money to move out if he continues to smoke, he could get cancer like his uncle which could make him die early, if he quits smoking his health will improve, though it'll be hard to quit it will save him money, and he is scared every time he smokes because he thinks about his uncle who died from it. The health belief model could also influence the youths' behaviors towards the Truth campaign because it can allow them to become educated on the consequences, benefits, and costs of smoking and increase their motivation to never start smoking, to quit smoking, help others to quit, and to end smoking. This could lead to them joining the Truth campaign because they are motivated and want to seek out resources that can help them become more involved in making a change for this health issue.

Channels of Communication

The channels used in the Truth campaign are Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and TV. The Truth campaign is also on TikTok with the hashtag #thisisquitting that is sponsored by Truth. The PSA I have chosen to analyze is the 'Ditch Juul, This is Quitting', which is featured on YouTube.

The 'Ditch Juul, This is quitting' PSA features young people on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram destroying their Juuls, which is the most popular e-cigarette, and other vaping products. This PSA captures the attention of viewers by having upbeat music, fast clips, and young people featured in the video that are throwing away their Juuls in a creative way. This is effective in capturing the attention of viewers because it has young people in the video destroying their Juuls by doing trick shots with them, throwing them in water, or blowing them up in creative and trendy ways. This allows the audience, teens, to relate to those in the PSA since they are similar in age. The PSA does not use a lot, if any information to help the audience understand the topic. Since Juul is so popular and well known amongst the youth, the PSA doesn't need to give information on Juuls or other e-cigarettes. The dangers of using these products are exploited on the news and in articles already. So, Truth focuses more so on encouraging young people to change their behavior and habits around using e-cigarette products by displaying encouraging videos of others quitting.

This PSA does motivate the viewer to seek out additional information on quitting e-cigarettes because it shows positive, healthy, young people quitting their Juuls and the video inserts text saying 'join the 70,000 and counting', and 'text "ditchjuul" to 88709'. The PSA makes it seem simple to quit which can motivate young people to follow the easy step of texting the number. However this PSA doesn't necessarily motivate the audience to seek out more information on vaping or smoking. The video only provides Truth's website at the end of the video, but doesn't give the audience any incentive as to why or how to become more informed and helpful to others on the topic. This PSA is not very effective in providing adequate information about how to find more information. The video features a number for the audience to

text in order to help them quit, but it doesn't tell people how texting the number helps them quit. Though the video features the website link at the end, it isn't a specific link that can direct the audience to a page about ditching their Juuls. Rather it is just to the homepage of the website. There are no additional options given for where or how individuals can receive help other than by texting the number. I think this PSA is very generic in design and focuses more on a direct approach to helping the youth see other young people ditch their Juuls which they feel in turn will inspire the audience to quit.

In regards to the Truth campaign's website, it is an easy online platform to navigate and find credible information on the health issue. There is a homepage with different links to direct users to, a take action tab, a tab for facts on the health issue, a tab for merchandise, an about Truth tab, an opioid tab, and a tab titled 'the vault'. In addition, if the user needs to search for something specific there is a search bar for them to type in what they are looking for. There are a lot of videos one can watch, pictures to view, and statistics that allow the user to react to. The platform provides information to the audience through reliable facts, videos that show movements or people taking a stand against smoking and big tobacco companies. This is effective because it can allow the user to strictly read facts about the issue or view videos to inform them on the issue and make it known that there is a community out there for them to join.

The information on the online platform does feel complete and informative. Truth provides various statistics, different videos, and a lot of information that is applicable to this health issue and is worded for others to understand. The information that is the most compelling is the fact page. Each of the facts has a source directly cited below it which verifies the statistics and makes the source feel credible to users. The communicative component is featured by

making hashtags to submit videos, being able to react to the facts the website provides, submit what you've done to help, view videos either on the website or their other platforms, and collaborate with Truth. This communicative component motivates users to interact by allowing these various forms of interaction to take place. It gives the user a sense of power and involvement to join others in the movement to end smoking. The communicative component does inspire continued interaction to a relatively high extent. When individuals join the cause they get emails and texts from Truth, and by joining they feel as though they're responsible for helping change the course of smoking in the US. The incoming emails and texts from Truth actively work to remind individuals why they joined, supply new information, and make new opportunities to help. This constant mediated interaction increases the chance for users to continue to interact.

I think the PSA and Truth's website work well together as a unit. The PSA demonstrates an upbeat, captivating video for the audience to watch and recognize it came from Truth. Then those who are interested can search for Truth's website online and search for more information on either the topic of Juuls, smoking in general, or other resources and information. A helpful balance of visuals and information is created from the combination of Truth's PSA video and the online presence of Truth's website. The choice of limiting the PSA to clips of teens ditching their Juuls and the insert of the texting information to quit, were appropriate for the message Truth was trying to convey. By the target audience seeing other people destroy their Juuls in a fun way and having an easy method created for people to quit, was an effective, simple, and self-explanatory way for the message of joining the Truth community and stopping smoking to be compelled. For Truth's online platform, the design, layout, visuals, information, and

interactivity were all appropriate for the content of the health issue Truth is focused on. It is easy to navigate, has valuable information, and allows users to interact and join the movement towards eliminating smoking. The Truth campaign does offer a compelling, up-to-date and innovative take on ending smoking.

Conclusion

The Truth campaign utilizes their website for information, interaction, and inclusivity amongst their audience. The Truth campaign uses various platforms to reach the youth and young adults. Several factors can provoke one to begin or continue smoking, but this campaign brings light to credible facts, resources, and a community of people working together to end smoking and expose big tobacco companies' lies. Truth continues to revamp the way they interact and get noticed by their audience. They also get influencers to join the movement by having them make creative videos online to quickly reach the youth and motivate them. The Truth campaign is extremely effective in inspiring the youth and others to quit and join them. The website allows the audience to become educated with credible content and thoughtful PSAs. This campaign has continued to work and create change since it started and they have no plans of stopping until smoking is put to an end and the misuse of opioids is put to a halt.

References

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