

Wheaties Commercial

The Wheaties advertisement is no doubt a child captivating kind. The advertisement is well structured for the audience, the child. The simplistic nature of the advertisement with the slowly speaking lady, exemplifies the caring mother or school teacher, who will speak slowly in a simple manner that the child can hear and comprehend the message. The parable of the captivated child is well utilized in this advert, especially with the music at the beginning. This is bound to immediately grab the attention of children, who have short attention spans. Children like sing along songs and the child is immediately captivated to listen and sing along to the song at the beginning of the advert. This is particularly effective as the child will always anticipate the commercial firstly for its entertainment value. Therefore, the advertiser has achieved a considerable milestone in capturing the attention of the audience which is the foremost important element in advertising. To sell a product one should find a way to make it known to the population and this can never happen if you fail to capture the audience's attention.

The other significant delivery mode that makes the advertisement so effective is the motherly lady who delivers the message in an easy to understand way. As mentioned earlier, her persona exemplifies that of a caring motherly figure who has immense knowledge on what is good for the child. She delivers the message in a narrative way which again is just right for the captivation of the child. Children love stories especially when they are told or read out loud to them. When listening to the advert, it is not a command or admonishment rather it is a gentle narration of a story by

a motherly figure and by now the advertisers already has the child. They have already sold the product at this stage.

The makers of this advertisement had no doubt consulted with the child psychologists of the day. The advert is an obvious manipulation of emotions and desires. It is not coercive. During the period when this advert was made and aired to the public, child psychology was a field that was receiving a lot of attention, and parenting was seen as critical in the formation of the individual. Behavior and attitudes that the child would carry for the rest of his or her life were, and still are, formed at a very early stage in development. Children who grow up in coercive and harsh environments were often seen to develop into rebellious youths and adults. At this time the role of the mother was seen a major influence on a child character and as said by Marchand, "An hour's mothering now is worth a year's advice later" (p. 229). Therefore, the mother had the duty to not only make sure that the child was well behaved and well fed, but had to employ effective tactics that would ensure that the child' was motivated to follow the regimen that would make him or her so.

This tactics had to be particularly captivating for the child. This is kind of captivating nurturing follows the four assumptions highlighted by Merchand in his easy. He cites the first one as being the assumption that the personal development of the child is essential and the parents should give their children "attention and companionship". Therefore they should endeavor to make the right decisions without being forceful as this would only be counter effective, and the desired effects would rarely be achieved.

Another assumption cited is that overall, children rarely know what is good for them and therefore they require the guidance of the adult for their well being. The author says that “if left to themselves, children would choose the wrong diet or acquire undesirable habits if left to them”. Children without the gentle guidance of their parents would acquire roguish behavior, eat seemingly sweet but ultimately unhealthy food and generally become individuals without a sense of directions and have unhealthy bodies.

However, even with the knowledge of what’s best for the child, the parent had to find creative means to ensure that the child does the task or eats healthy foods out of their volition. In order to do so, psychological manipulation played the key role as the child could be manipulated to do something especially when a reward was promised. The Wheaties advertisement is true to this concept. The child not only gets to eat the delicious cereal, but there is a reward at the end. The Blackboard! The conceivers of the advert in consultation with the child psychologist came up with reward system which is not only effective on children, but on adults as well. The promise of a blackboard to scribble on was a genius concept. Children admire their teachers who get to write on the blackboard and giving them one for themselves is definitely the ultimate captivation. This would ensure that the child’s appetite for the cereal was heightened to such heights so as to finish the cereals and acquire the carton blackboard. This concept no doubt ensured unprecedented consumption of cereal by the children and possible hurt the pocket of the parent but the manufacturer was a happy person and the child was healthy was healthy.

The parable that opens Marchand’s essay is another good illustration of the effectiveness of this method of child captivation. The two women with equally unhealthy

boys employed different methods in their attempt to make their young boys healthy and strong. One, on realizing her child's weakness, used coercion to make her boy eat his vegetables. This was not achieved but produced a sulky and complaining child who performed poorly in school. The other mother's methods were more captivating and in the end her child got to eat his spinach and became healthy and strong.

The promise held by the advertisement for its audience is great. The motherly woman points at the character on the front part of the advertisement who looks like a happy fellow. This, she attributes is because he/she gets to eat Wheaties cereal, the breakfast for champions. Therefore the kinds who ensured that their mother bought and served them this cereal in the morning were not only promised to be happy, but also to become champions and in addition, a blackboard to scribble on.

This kind of concept of the parable of the captivated child is used in present times very effectively. Children and in some instances, adults are captivated to engage or consume seemingly unattractive or tedious services and unsavory goods. To make them want to do this they are captivated by seeing the item as beneficial with a good reward at the end. This is often used in advertising medicine and supplements for children e.g. "Scots emulsion" and "gym" for adults

Therefore, as stated by Merchand, the advertisement provides answerers to the consumer of its products. The Wheaties cereal advertisement is the ultimate answer to a parent who wants her child to eat healthy without making a fuss out of it. The child on the other hand is sufficiently entertained and gets a reward at the end of it all, not forgetting that he gets to grow up healthy and strong, and without any psychological

problems as the parent never used force or undue coercion to make him or her healthy and strong. The society also gets an individual who is able to be productive and not disrupt the harmony and balance therein due to problems or bad behavior acquired in childhood.

Work Cited

Ding Dong Wheaties School Commercial Retrieved January 20, 2010 from

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62A-Homjvzs>

Marchand Roland. The Great Parables. University of California Press, California, 1986