

Responding to pop culture

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HERE HERE YOUR HERE HERE Responding to Pop Culture: “ Wheel of Fortune” In order to be considered relevant pop culture, the imagery, concept, or phenomenon must be mainstream and significant to the psychosocial characteristics of conventional audiences. Most fitting of this criteria is the television program “ Wheel of Fortune” which depicts everyday citizens engaged in social and sensation-seeking scenarios where competition, adventure, and thrill are part of the psychological experience. The criteria used to evaluate “ Wheel of Fortune” as a viable and significant medium for popular culture are in its relevance to the average Joe themes that illustrate contestants in very pertinent terms to audience lifestyle and then appropriating excitement to make positive emotional connection to human behavior related to needs for excitement and enrichment that most of the target audience shares psychologically. What makes “ Wheel of Fortune” a practical example of effective pop culture is in the show’s ability to turn audience dreams into practical reality by illustrating the notion that fantasies of materialism and pleasure are achievable for the average Joe consumer lifestyle, thus making a positive collective connection to everyday life. After the contestants have offered their rather humdrum, typical lifestyle attributes and family connections, the audience establishes a bond with the players related to their lifestyle similarities and builds an immediate sense of empathy built on common bonds which is a strength of this particular medium of pop culture. The show concept also illustrates a sense of adventure through the provision of glamorous prize packages that fit with most audience psychological profiles related to exploration and lifestyle diversity. However, where the show is weak as a pop culture icon is in lack of

diversity of show concept, thus creating opportunities for audience boredom or perceptions of monotony. Despite these structural weaknesses in presentation, the show is popular as it presents greed and wealth as potential for instantaneous opportunity while the viewing audience is forced to labor to achieve similar self-indulgence. This makes it appealing to the middle-class audience as it can promote a perception that life does not have to always be lackluster. Psychological theory defines salience as the relevance or importance of a particular sign, a symbol that stands out from others in an unambiguous way (Heath, Ho & Berger, 2006). "Wheel of Fortune" provides salience as an exciting medium for instant wealth accumulation and rapid lifestyle enhancement, something not common in the middle-aged consumer household and lifestyle who is the main target audience for this pop culture piece.

The value of "Wheel of Fortune" is that it provides motivation, inspiration and even hope for the target consumer fitting the middle-class, middle-aged profile that has always had to work hard to achieve financially-based freedoms. It fulfills value in the audience by allowing those with mundane lives to explore creativity and experience exhilaration in a life that is filled with regular tension or is generally tedious and repetitive. By exploring higher psychological ambitions with contestants and prizes, the audience achieves salience through inspiration.

Reference

Heath, C., Ho, B. and Berger, J. (2006), "Focal Points in Coordinated Divergence,"

Journal of Economic Psychology, 27(2), pp. 635-647.

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