

Behavioural studies,
attitudes explain the
purpose of the use of
shocking images ...



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Explain the Purpose of the Use of Shocking Images in Campaigns to Attempt to Change an Individual's Attitude Shocking advertising attempts to alter a person's attitude by producing images which jolt the personality. Using shocking campaigns has a long history in charity advertising, for example, and in public awareness campaigns (the AIDS virus in particular produced a number of shocking advertisements which attempted to change the attitude of the public towards condoms (Gifford, 2007). However, there is also evidence that " Messages that elicit primarily favorable thoughts toward a particular recommendation produce more agreement than messages that elicit primarily unfavorable thoughts" (Brinol et co, 2004). Shocking ads which attempt to change a person's attitude to something need to focus upon this positive reinforcement, rather than negative, horrifying, or other methods: the French Ad using poisonous animals, for example, may cause people to miss the message. People are also affected by advertisements through emotional responses, and this is another important factor in the use of shocking advertising. Understanding psychological and social bases for attitudes may be the key to using shocking advertising to influence individual behavior.

Individuality is a key component of many walks of social life, from home to work. Indeed, Mullins suggests that committed staff with valuable individuality are one of the keys to organizational health and success (Mullins, 2007). Psychologists have developed a number of different ways of defining the individual; Eysenck defined them through two key personality differences: introversion/extroversion and stability/instability (or neuroticism). Others, such as Cattell, divided the individual personality into

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surface traits, which are consistent and form the basis of behavior, and source traits, which underlie and inform the surface traits. These two ideas rely upon the notion of a 'fixed' individuality, which implies that the individual would not be affected by shocking advertising in the long-term. There remains the factor of what influences their outward behavior and attitudes, and their self-identity, both of which will be discussed later.

In Advertising, an important psychological theory suggests the personality is not permanent: Erickson suggested that personality developed continuously through life. The idea that the personality is flexible, and therefore open to social pressure. Modern people are more focused upon work than in the past (Broadfield and Rollinson, 2002), and this may have altered significantly their tendency to be impressed by advertisements. More modern research suggests that the security of the individual is directly related to the impact which advertising has upon the person.

With these factors in mind, it is the response of the individual in psychological terms which is the prime purpose of advertising. Considering again the AIDS campaign, other countries aside from France used emotional triggers to encourage individuals to change their behavior. Germany, for example, used an installment of paper figures with quotes from children who had experienced AIDS. This emotional advertisement shocks through the inter-splicing of AIDS and children; the French advertisements similarly used horror to evoke images to the AIDS epidemics. " Charities often deal with extremely distressing subjects and sometime a degree of shock is warranted in order to get their message across" (ASA, 2007). Whether this worked successfully depends upon whether the individual was able to extract a

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positive message from the destructive images - those who suffer from AIDS may have been unintentionally tainted. The purpose of using shocking images to change an individual's attitude remains to change the personality of the impulses through emotional responses. These shocking images, however, also promote negative ideas which may backfire.

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