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## Social Marketing Theory

Society has become saturated with advertisements and demanding more and more of our attention. Billboard ads, Facebook ads, digital ads, Google ads, transit ads, Magazines, flashing, scrolling, jarring, eye catching ads, they are everywhere. Media companies actively strategize to captivate audiences. Social marketing theories aim to examine these strategies (Baron and Davis). Elite sources manipulate the audience towards interest and action through campaigns across various platforms.

Several aspects and methods of social marketing theories exist to examine how audiences are captured. Baron and Davis authors of Mass Communication Theory textbook outline several methods of social marketing theory. Firstly, is the method of “inducing audience awareness of campaign topics or candidates” (Baron and Davis). For example, presidential candidates and politicians Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg have been featured on *The Breakfast Club* Talk Show and on the *Daily Show* by Trevor Noah on a segment (“It’s 2020 24/7”). Today the trend especially among youth is watching reality television, comedy sketch and political satire. It is perhaps easier for candidates to gain popularity and attract young audiences and votes with alternative channels in promoting political campaigns.

Secondly the method of targeting messages at specific audience segments more receptive or susceptible to those messages is a strategy of social marketing (Baron and Davis). Companies such as Dove, and Maybelline have specific target audiences and seem to craft their messages towards the audience of women.

Specifically Dove targets diverse women in their ad campaign commercial *#Show Us*. It features a diverse variety of women including middle aged, a woman of color with curly hair, a transvestite and a woman with vitiligo. It aims to attract a diverse group of women to gain their interest and ultimately towards purchasing Dove products. (“Dove Project #Show Us. Shattering Beauty Stereotypes”).

Thirdly social marketing theories expounds on the method of reinforcing messages within targeted segments and for encouraging these people to influence others through face-to-face communication (Baron and Davis). For example, Pride is a campaign that has been placed across various forms of media including television commercials and product packaging. Pantene released a commercial featuring various homosexuals and transvestites with different hair types and styles (“Don’t Hate Me Because I’m Beautiful LGBTQ”). The Kind granola bars, and Microsoft have product packaging featuring the Pride rainbow colors. The messaging embraces the variety in sexual identity and has been reinforced across several media platforms.

Fourthly, methods of social marketing include cultivating images and impressions of people, products, or services (Baron and Davis). Nexplanon, a company that sells etonogestrel implant devices has a clever slogan “Armor Up with Nexplanon” (“Nexplanon Commercial”). Engaging awareness in birth control contraceptive methods is done eloquently with their catchy slogan.

The fifth method involves stimulating interest and inducing information seeking and audience members (Baron and Davis). Macy's Go Red Campaign aims to increase awareness of heart disease. While often overlooked as a serious issue, Macy's successfully increases awareness with the Go Red Dress Campaign. A partnership with the American Heart Association and red dress sales were combined in donation to Heart Disease research ("American Heart Association Kicks off Go Red for Women Campaign").

As part of an eco-conscious campaign Burger King releases the *#BKMeltdown* Campaign to eliminate and repurpose plastic toys and raise awareness about sustainability and recycling ("Burger King Meltdown").

The sixth social marketing theory examines the method for inducing desired decision making or positioning through strong images or impressions (Baron and Davis). One example is a Target commercial that gives the strong impression that gun violence is a real serious issue, especially in schools. The *Target Back to School Essentials* commercial, initially showing middle school children innocently walking the halls transforms to a lockdown to stay safe from an active shooter on the premise. ("Target Back to School Essentials Commercial"). The underlying message here is positioning towards gun violence issues.

Pepsi released a commercial featuring Kendall Jenner who leaves her glamorous photo shoot to join a diverse group of young street protestors, then offers the police a can of Pepsi. Everyone, including the police are happy and cheerful at the end, and the phrase “Live Bolder” concludes the commercial. (“Kendall Jenner for Pepsi Commercial”). As protesting and police brutality have become hot topic items in recent years, including this imagery raises awareness of current issues and prompts audiences to contemplate.

The final seventh method involves activating audience segments, especially those who have been targeted by the campaign. In this method, audiences are on the verge of deciding. Marketing campaigns attract decision makers by offering free merchandise (Baron and Davis). While Americans maybe undecided about choosing a presidential candidate, Andrew Yang really moves audiences towards action in his Yang 2020 campaign offering \$1,000 a month for ten needy families. This free offer has sparked the interest of many Americans inciting them towards action in deciding on a candidate.

Advertisements have the power to change attitudes and decisions about products, candidates, ideas and world causes (Baron and Davis). Social marketing theories demonstrate the impact of manipulating audiences through influencing viewers towards action and decision with clever images, slogans and promoting messages across various new media channels.

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