

Analysing the Army recruitment campaign “Be The Best”

In this essay I will be writing about the army recruitment campaign “Be The Best”. The army to change its racist image called in the marketing company “Saatchi and Saatchi”. The army selected “Saatchi and Saatchi” because of their notoriety for work in changing the image of company’s for the better.

“Saatchi and Saatchi” thought that “be the best” would be a good slogan for an army recruitment campaign. In this essay I will be writing about the reason(s) why “Saatchi and Saatchi” thought this would be a good slogan for army recruitment, why the slogan suits the army and the slogans effect on the targeted public. I will be writing about the set of four posters created by “Saatchi and Saatchi” which will include who the targeted public are and their effect. “Saatchi and Saatchi” also created a poster to recruit ethnic minorities into the army. I will also be writing about this Poster and its effect on the targeted public.

The four posters contain four different images. From closer inspection you can see that all the images are connected by the fact that they involve helping people, None of the posters contain images of violence on the army’s part, which is what the publics’ stereotypical view of the army is. This shows that the army were trying to change the public’s perception of themselves (violence, gunfire etc).

Two of the posters are linked by the fact that they are both images to do with food. One of these contains what looks like to be starving children, which affects the public in a way that would not be the same if there were starving adults in the poster. You get an idea that the children in the poster are starving because of the fact they look malnourished and unhappy, they also holding out containers in a way, which tells you that they want them to be filled with food.

Another thing that links all four posters is the fact that the photos are taken to simulate four different views through the eyes of army members. This works very well as it gives perspective recruits a preview of the things they will see and do when in the army. This way of taking the photo works the best with the poster containing starving children, as we imagine the children are asking us to give them food, which makes us feel that we need to help in some way.

All of the four posters contain a statement, all stating that 17 year olds are “needed” or “wanted” for a certain type of job (all of the statements contain “required”, “wanted” or “needed”(all meaning the same thing, variation is used to make the phrases sound slightly different from each other). The posters use clever symbolism to get the message across. “Wanted 17 year olds into body building” is one of the phrases used, which is accompanied by the starving children image. This is a clever play on words used to encourage perspective recruits to read/view the posters. The phrase without the image would basically mean 17 year olds into body building (weight-lifting etc.) are needed. The phrase accompanied by the image means “body-building” in the form of feeding starving people (building bigger body’s). This technique is used in all four posters, which helps to slightly entertain the public when the posters are viewed.

The Statements on the posters are used in such a way to make them invitations. For example; “17 year olds needed to work in fast food chain” this statement changes to “please join us to work in fast food chain if your 17”. This slight form of a subliminal message is very effective, as it doesn’t make the army sound desperate for recruits, e.g. “please join us if your 17 to help some hungry people” does not work as well as “17 year olds needed to work in fast food chain”.

Two of the four posters compare themselves to real jobs. One of them states, “17 year olds needed to work in fast food chain” and the other one states, “17 year old body piercers required”. The two jobs mentioned (body piercer and a worker in a fast food chain) are typical jobs that school leavers might go in to. This creates a comparison between the boring and uneventful jobs school leavers would do and the meaningful and eventful (so called) job of being in the army. So these two posters basically present the choice, a boring and unimportant job or an important and eventful job.

The layout of the four posters are all similar. The image fills up around 1/3 of a page and is surrounded by a black background. The black background works well in illuminating the white writing and making the image stand out. The dark background also creates an atmosphere, which is a representation of the atmosphere felt by army members in these four situations. The main army recruitment slogan “be the best” along with the England flag and the contact number is contained in a small space near the bottom of the poster. It is very important to have these on the posters as they link the posters to other posters made in the past, advertise the main slogan used by the army, advertise country loyalty and give the important contact number to join. It is important for these to be contained in a small space so they do not take the focus away from the main content.

The phrases are set out in to lines for different reasons. In all the posters “17 year olds” are in the same line, the “required” or “needed” words have their own line, the job comparisons have their own line and the sentence linkers have their own line, e.g.:

Wanted-----extension of required

17 year olds

Into-----sentence linker

Body Building---job comparison

The phrases are set out this way to link each of the phrases in each of the posters.

All of the posters contain the words “17 year olds” to appeal to young school leavers.

The two posters “wanted 17 year olds into body building” and “17 year olds needed to work in fast food chain” fit in with the slogan “be the best” because the starving people would think or say “you’re the best” when you give them much needed food. The poster “17 year old body piercers required” fits in with the slogan “be the best” as the army is inviting perspective recruits to “be the best” and prevent or cure diseases in places where people are dying of them. The “17 year olds needed to help stop road rage” poster challenges the perspective recruits to be the best and stop someone from killing or hurting people. All the posters basically exclaim that if you join the army and help these three causes you will “be the best”. Overall I believe these posters work well in getting across the message that, the army is not all about war and violence, that its also about helping good causes and saving innocent peoples lives. Showing real life photographs of the army helping instead of killing really helps in changing the stereotypical image of the army and has changed my view of the army for the better. In my mind Saatchi and Saatchi have done a good job and have stayed true to their reputation of changing the image of companies for the better.

The poster on resource sheet 2 was created by Saatchi and Saatchi to change the racist image of the army. The army wished to change this image to recruit more people from ethnic groups (this poster was specifically aimed at Afro Caribbean’s).

The image on the poster is an Afro Caribbean male. Black males will immediately identify with this man and be attracted in to viewing the rest of the posters content. The male in the poster has an angry expression on his face, this along with the pointed finger (which reminds me of army recruitment posters in the past, the “your country needs you! Posters used in wartime are an example) gives us the impression the man is angry with someone or with a group of people.

The phrase “who are you calling a coconut?” is placed near the male’s mouth. This placement of the phrase and the fact that there are speech marks on either side sends the message across that the man in the photo is saying these words. From all this information you get the idea that the man is retaliating at someone calling him a “coconut”. The second thing you notice is the chunk of writing at the bottom corner of the poster (think this is the main body of the poster, the large photo and phrase are just to draw the reader in to read the main body). The first word in this paragraph is “I’m” which tells you that the text is in singular tense, As the black male is the only person in the poster it is obvious he is saying these words. Black males would be more interested in reading what a person of their ethnicity is saying about the army than someone whose not. A white army member saying the army is not racist is not as credible as a black army member stating this.

The first sentence of the paragraph “I’m not a sellout, a coconut, a choc-ice, or an uncle tom” gives us the impression that black people have called him these names in the past. The

meaning of the words “choc ice” “coconut” are both the same, they are both symbolic slang for a black person that does not stay true to their own race and becomes “white”(coconut, choc ice- black on the outside, white on the inside). “Sell out” and “uncle tom” mean the same as these words when used in this context. Therefore we know that fellow Afro Caribbean’s have called him these names, not other races. Basically the man in the poster is saying his not a “wannabe white person”, he is a proud black member of the British army. This first sentence is very important to the overall message of the poster as the man is basically saying if you join the army you are not “selling out” your race. The phrase “a job that trains me well, pays me well and treats me well” is giving more reasons why people should join. This phrase adds in a bit of advertising to appeal to white people as well as black. The phrase “they respect me, I respect them” advertises the fact that white people now have respect for ethnic minorities that are in the army, and if black people do sign up they will be respected. The phrase “the days of the army turning a blind eye to racial harassment are over” also advertises the fact that the army (unlike the past) now punish or deal with racist army members, giving protection to ethnic minorities. The last sentence of the paragraph “Britain is a multi-racial country, it needs a multi-racial army” really sums up the whole poster and condenses the main message of the poster into one sentence. This sentence was probably created by Saatchi and Saatchi as a backup, used for certain people who do not get or understand the overall message the poster is trying to get across.

As usual the poster contains contact numbers and “be the best” slogan accompanied by the England flag, linking the poster with others made in the past, coherent with the “be the best” campaign.

Overall I believe this poster is very effective in getting across the message that the army is no longer racist. I don’t quite believe this poster fits in with the slogan “be the best” as the poster’s two messages for ethnic minorities is that the army is no longer racist and you will not be selling out your race if you join. The army is stating that you will be respected and you and your country will be proud of you, but the poster does not mention anything about being “better” than anything. This is congruent with quite a few of Saatchi and Saatchi’s “be the best” army recruitment adverts. The adverts do work well in promoting and changing the Army’s image for the better but do not fit in exactly with “be the best”. I believe this because the adverts do not always compare the army to other careers or job’s. The Set of four posters does lightly fit in with “be the best” because of the two references to typical and boring jobs; this however is not the main focus of the posters, which is the reason why I think they “lightly” fit in. However the army could be trying to challenge the public to join the army and become one of the best in the army. If this is true, Saatchi have not got this message across clearly.

I do think the whole “be the best” army recruitment campaign has been successful in promoting its image while giving reasons why people should sign up.