

Critics of Two Advertisements

In our everyday lives we are surrounded by advertisements, for example, we wake up receiving junk mail on our doorsteps, work in environments with posters on walls and leaflets on desks, all advertisements of some sorts.

Each year, billions of pounds are spent on advertising by companies whose aims are to attract your attention and obviously wanting you to purchase their products, waiting for your money.

In my essay I will be comparing two advertisements produced for television. These are for John Smith's and Strongbow, both are for alcohol with one difference; John Smith's bitter and Strongbow's sider.

The first I will explain is the John Smith's advertisement. This advertisement has chosen to football as their topic. It starts off with five men playing football in a public football pitch, each performing tricks of staying the ball in the air and then passing it to another player. The first three men demonstrated their exceptionally good skills until they passed it to a rather over-weighted man which resembles the comedian Peter Kay who instead of performing tricks, kicked the ball directly towards someone else's back garden. The man then mumbles proudly 'ave it'. This eventually triggered the revelation of the product: a bottle of John Smith's. Adjacent to the product is a slogan stating 'No Nonsense'.

The second advertisement I shall explain is of Strongbow. This advertisement starts off with a scorching sun, shining upon and burning down five men on a rubber raft in the middle of a sea. The more dominant character lying down on the raft says: 'throats so dry... don't... think we can... take anymore...' After the weak voiced speech, the man then sat up and all five of them jumped out into the "shallow" water, which it finally reveals a beach, losing the "serious" effect. All five of the men then races up through the beach and into a bar, in which they ask for five Strongbow. After a swift moment of patience, the men then collect the Strongbow and together, drink it at the same time. The advertisement then ends with a slogan quoting 'Get a Thirst First'. Besides the slogan is a rubber raft which eventually gets shot by two arrows simultaneously, deflating it.

There are both differences and similarities in these two advertisements. If you think about it carefully, the names John Smith's and Strongbow are both traditional English names. John Smith is a traditional English name and Strongbow, although not English name, it is a unique piece of weaponry used in the Middle Ages by the English and has defeated many other countries using it.

The demographics of the characters also had similarities and links between the two advertisements. Although the people who appeared in John Smith's and Strongbow are of different backgrounds and age, they are both people of the product's target audience. The John Smith's characters are around ages twenty to thirty and are single males. In Strongbow however, there is a difference target audience of ages around eighteen to twenty five, slightly younger than their John Smith's cousin. This is mainly because the John Smith's is bitter, a bit weaker than the sider of the Strongbow counterpart. It is obvious that the characters of Strongbow are of slightly a higher class and richer compared to the ones in John Smith's.

As the Strongbow advertisement is set on a sunny beach, it could mean that the five young men as quite a considerable excess of wealth and can afford to go on holiday. This is because sider is more of a Southern drink in England and Southern people are mostly more richer than the people of the North. In the John Smith's advertisement however there are some main differences, the characters can be easily seen as a lower working class due to the clothes they wear and the area they play football in. The area of this advertisement is set in a football pitch as I said, however, terraced housing in which also surrounds it. The connotations of terraced housing are mostly homes for rather 'poorer' people in towns. Terraced houses are also more popular in the Northern part of England, linking to their alcohol bitter as bitter is Northern drink. I have also noticed that Peter Kay used a Northern accent when he decided to say the football term 'ave it', instead of traditional English 'have it'. This proves that Peter Kay is representing the target audience Northern people. Both advertisements used the area of their alcohol to set the scene that their target audience is most probable to be in.

A similarity between the two advertisements is that they are both of a humorous genre. Both of them subvert the viewer in some way. The John Smith's way of humour is that Peter Kay simply kicked the football directly into some else's garden and being proud of it instead of performing tricks which could even be with more skill than of the first three players according to the viewers normal predictions. The Strongbow side however has set it much like a film leading the viewers to think maybe it could be a trailer for a film. It starts off with some classical music and with hot blinding sunlight. The people on the rubber raft looks weak and stranded in the middle of the sea. The connotation of the raft makes the advertisement look rather like a trailer for a film about people stranded in the sea perhaps. However, when the men jump out of the raft and revealing the shallow water beneath them, the humour comes. This is an unpredictable moment for the viewers as it is usually totally different from what they forebode.

The camera and lighting effects on the other hand shows differences between the two advertisements. The camera effects used in John Smith's are fairly limited. The camera mostly focused on the football whilst the footballers played their tricks. The camera actually never did see any of the footballer's faces as it had a close shot on the football. The camera only turned to a mid shot at Peter Kay after he kicked the ball away. No lighting effect or even music was used by this advertisement. This makes the advertisement seem relatively cheap to produce. It also gives an effect of looking like a casual hand held camera by a normal person, trying to capture the exceptionally good skills into a video. On the other side, the Strongbow advert went on the other side of the fence and produced the advertisement like a film. Lighting effect was used at the start to show the blinding sunlight and music to create atmosphere to lead the viewer to thinking that the advertisement was serious. The close shot was used to focus at one of the young man's face at the start and long shot was executed when the men raced up the steep, less sun-lighted beach. It seems obvious that the Strongbow advertisement has put in a lot more money in to produce it compared to the John Smith's counterpart. They have chosen different styles because of the drink's origin. The John Smith's is of Northern part of England, meaning people of a lower class, therefore chosen the 'cheaper' effect. The Strongbow however, chose the 'expensive' film effect due to their Southern target audience. This is another link to the target audience they have chosen as I have said.

Both advertisements are similar in some ways, one of which is the ending. Both advertisements never revealed their product until the end where they also show their slogan. Both advertisements ended with a view of the product and a slogan. For the Strongbow advertisement, the slogan 'Get a Thirst First' represents the characters at the start, who where following the instructions of the slogan. They stayed on the raft for the longest time possible to get thirst thus portraying the slogan. Next to the product itself is a raft being shot by arrows. This is used to remind you of the product's name as arrows are obviously linked to Strongbows. The slogan of John Smith's is 'No Nonsense' which is used to represent Peter Kay in his no nonsense of kicking the ball. The slogan is also in a font of numbers, which appeared in footballers' shirts. This links the John Smith's advertisement to football. After a small pause, Peter Kay comes along, brushes oranges, which was positioned right next to the bottle aside and grabs the bottle. This proves the importance of the John Smith's compared to oranges that could symbolise other items, showing that John Smith's is the most important thing in the world.

I now conclude my review saying that the main differences of both the advertisements are inspired by the origin of the products. They both seem to use the same humorous effect, subverting the viewer into thinking something else, and then turning around immediately. The main differences are that John Smith's has chosen more of a 'cheaper' production style and Strongbow choosing a more 'expensive' approach to the cause due to the alcohol's origin, representing the areas and characteristics of their target audiences, preserving the good effect in the advertisement. These are only two of the advertisements in our television environment, world of advertising. I thank thee for reading.