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Semiotic Analysis of Health Significance in Digital Media Campaigns: “Smoking... Slow Death” on YouTube

التحليل السيميائي للدلالة الصحية في الحملات الإعلامية الرقمية: “التدخين... موت بطيء” على يوتيوب

Analyse sémiotique de la signification sanitaire dans les campagnes médiatiques numériques : “Fumer... Mort lente” sur YouTube

Nabil Chaib - Military Higher School Of Information and Communication

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NABIL CHAIB

MILITARY HIGHER SCHOOL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Technological developments on the web have currently necessitated a change in many communicative practices in the health sector, affecting aspects such as storing, retrieving, and producing information, as well as presenting media materials in various health formats, from traditional to digital carriers.

Social networking sites, also known as social networking tools or social media, represent a new type of communication that has evolved with the advent of the Internet and multimedia technology. They play a prominent role in collecting, editing, analyzing, and exchanging news among users, and in providing the media with accurate and credible information. In this context, the citizen is the primary participant in creating and sharing media content on a large scale.

In a related context, media awareness campaigns conducted through digital platforms and social networking sites are among the most significant ways of expressing public trends, as they involve a detailed analysis of the situations and circumstances related to the target audience. These campaigns address various psychological, social, and other aspects concerning individuals.

Consequently, health awareness campaigns have emerged, aimed at preserving individuals’ psychological, mental, and physical health. Such campaigns are prevalent across various media, including social networking sites and YouTube, due to their artistic characteristics and persuasive abilities. By engaging both auditory and visual senses, these campaigns enable viewers to understand and internalize the media messages conveyed through image and sound. Digital platforms have thus become a major driving force behind media campaigns, enhancing public awareness and encouraging active participation in the development processes led by these campaigns.

Therefore, media campaigns through digital platforms are closely associated with semiology, which focuses on signs, meanings, and their practices through a generative path of meanings and contexts. Semiological approaches involve describing, analyzing, deconstructing, and reconstructing signs based on harmony and interaction. This semiological framework has become increasingly relevant, particularly with the growing interaction patterns of young people with social networking sites and the rise of globalization, which has brought significant developments in the field of informatics (Chaib, 2018, p. 08).

Health awareness is crucial in the lives of individuals and societies, which motivates us to investigate the real reasons behind health awareness campaigns on YouTube. Our goal is to guide and raise awareness about the dangers of smoking, often referred to as slow suicide, and other unhealthy behaviors that have become widespread in contemporary times.

From the above, we pose the following research question: What are the manifestations of the health message conveyed by the media campaign “Smoking... Slow Death” published on YouTube during the first six months of 2022?

1. Methodology and Conceptual Procedures for Research Topics

1.1 Research Questions

This list presents key questions related to the effectiveness of media campaigns, particularly in health awareness efforts. It explores the implicit and indicative dimensions of the “no smoking” movement within the study. Another focus is on how the public interacts with media campaigns on YouTube, assessing the platform’s role in disseminating information. A comparison is made between traditional methods and digital platforms in terms of their effectiveness in spreading health awareness to the target audience. Finally, it examines how the outcomes of these media activities can contribute to establishing health education among YouTube users.

- What implicit and indicative dimensions does the “no smoking” movement include in the study?
- How does the public interact with media campaigns on YouTube?
- Compared to traditional methods, how effective is the health awareness campaign in spreading awareness among the target audience through digital platforms?
- How can the implications of the studied media activities help establish health education among YouTube users?

1.2 Importance and Objectives of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its focus on the role of media movements with social awareness objectives. This research aims to evaluate the impact of these media contents in raising awareness through various methods.

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the role and semantic dimension of health awareness campaigns on social networking sites, particularly YouTube.
2. To understand how virtual audiences interact with media activities through online platforms.
3. To assess the impact of media activities and the dissemination of awareness via YouTube.
4. To highlight the role of social media networks in promoting health awareness campaigns.
5. To identify which social networking sites are most used for health communication activities.

The importance of this topic is underscored by the significant impact of health awareness campaigns conducted through digital platforms, which have prompted extensive discussion among researchers and scholars about their importance and effectiveness. This has led to numerous studies on the various aspects and impacts of social networks like YouTube on society.

1.3 Methods and Materials

Scientific research relies on a systematic and clear methodology to define the research process and outcomes. This methodology focuses on revealing the internal relationships of discourse elements and reshaping the meaning system by clarifying the mechanisms that generate meaning.

Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is defined as a set of techniques and steps used to describe and analyze meaningful elements by establishing relationships with other factors (El Saffi, 2011, p. 09). In our psychoanalysis, we use audiovisual systems to address smoking risks and determine the designated level. The second stage involves assessing the inclusion level by asking why. Roland Barthes was the first to develop a psychoanalytic approach that involves two levels: the designated level, which relates to functions and meanings in evidence, and the embedded level, which links evidence, meaning, and the external environment, including social order, culture, and sociocultural background (Martin, 1994, p. 71).

1.4. Defining the Concepts and Terminology of the Study

This list outlines key concepts related to media and virtual communication in the context of awareness campaigns and social interactions. Media campaigns are organized efforts aimed at influencing the behavior and attitudes of the target audience through various media channels. “Virtual space” refers to a digital sphere where a virtual society emerges, while the “virtual world” is a product of technological advancements, creating a simulated environment for interaction. Programs are virtual communication spaces that facilitate exchanges through electronic media. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter embody this connectivity, allowing people to share ideas and experiences. Finally, health awareness extends beyond institutional efforts, representing a collective endeavor to promote health, with contributions from everyone.

- **Media Publicity:** Media campaigns are defined as organized efforts by media experts through various methods aimed at achieving specific goals. These campaigns involve a series of communication activities designed to provide information and change the behavior and attitudes of the target audience through different media.
- **Virtual Space:** The term “space” can be translated as “sphere” or the French word “Espace, which means space. Virtual space refers to an information society in various forms, including a virtual society.
- **Virtual World:** A virtual world is a product of advances in information and communication technology. It is a world that does not exist in the physical sense but is created by individuals who define its basic characteristics and features (Rahuma, 2005, p. 70).
- **Program:** This refers to a virtual communication space or world that allows communication and interaction through various electronic media in a simulated reality.
- **Social Networks:** The term “communication” originates from the Latin word “communis, which means general or shared. It implies connecting and achieving common goals. Social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are popular platforms used to connect people, especially for keeping in touch with friends and relatives and following the latest news about them (Rissoan, 2016, p. 112). This interaction within virtual communities aims to share ideas and experiences and exchange knowledge.
- **Health Awareness:** Health awareness is the understanding and consciousness people have about health-related issues. It involves

active participation in promoting health, which is not limited to media and health institutions (Arabic Dictionary, 2005, p. 44). Procedurally, health awareness is a form of public involvement where everyone contributes according to their capabilities.

2. The semiological analysis of the “no smoking, slow death”

2.1. Technical segmentation of the media campaign according to Christian Mitz’s approach

This table presents a technical analysis of two video sequences used in an anti-smoking awareness campaign. It outlines the visual and auditory aspects of each sequence, including the number of shots, shooting duration, camera movements, and image content. Both sequences use panoramic camera movements: the first highlights the toxic substances in smoking, while the second shows researchers investigating the lifespan of smokers and the daily death toll among them. The researchers’ voices are used without any background music or additional dialogue, solely providing explanations. There are no sound effects accompanying the images, emphasizing the informational and serious tone of the content.

Technical Breakdown of Anti-Smoking Awareness Video Sequences

Voice	sound effects	There are no effects based on the image	There are no effects based on the image
	Voice and dialogue	Researchers only explain without dialogue	Researchers only explain without dialogue
	Music	The researcher without music speaks	The researcher without music speaks
Picture	Picture conten	Components of smoking and toxic substances constituting	A group of researchers investigated the life span of smokers and how many smokers died each day.
	camera move-ment	Panoramic	Panoramic
	Lens Ladde	P.D.E	P.D.E
	Shooting Time	7 secondes	9 secondes
	Number Of Shots	1	2

This table provides a detailed breakdown of two additional video sequences from an anti-smoking campaign, focusing on their technical and auditory aspects. The third sequence features 11 shots and uses a panoramic camera movement to capture a researcher discussing heart attacks and other smoking-related diseases. Similar to previous sequences, the researcher speaks without background music, and no sound effects are employed. The fourth sequence, with 10 shots, involves an unstable camera movement to emphasize the persuasive and intimidating strategies used by researchers to encourage smokers to quit. Like the others, this segment relies solely on the researcher’s voice, without additional dialogue or sound effects.

Technical Analysis of Anti-Smoking Campaign Video Sequences

Voice	sound effects	There are no effects based on the image	There are no effects based on the image
	Voice and dialogue	Researchers only explain without dialogue	Researchers only explain without dialogue
	Music	The researcher without music speaks	The researcher without music speaks
Picture	Picture conten	The researcher talks about heart attacks and various diseases of the smoke	Researchers use persuasion and intimidation policies against smokers until they quit smoking
	camera move-ment	Panoramic	Unstable
	Lens Ladde	P.D.E	P.D.E
	Shooting Time	11 secondes	10 secondes
	Number Of Shots	3	4

2.2 Semiological analysis according to the approach of researcher Roland Barth

Figure 01: Represents the chemical components of a cigarette



The first segment of the video contains multiple layers of meaning and is presented through various shots. This part of the content serves an explanatory function. According to researcher Mahmoud Abrakin, “Some of them grew up to explain, such as exaggerating the title...” The video starts with a focus on smoking.

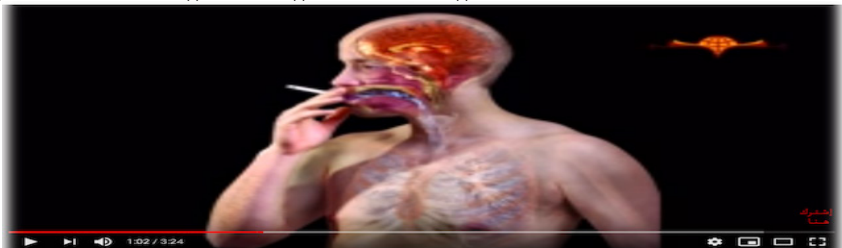
The title is a crucial element that sets the tone of the film. Roland Barthes stated that the title functions to mark the beginning of the text. It serves as the key to entering the film, allowing viewers to identify and understand its central theme.

In the first segment, a chart is used, featuring a range of colors. Red, for example, signifies blood and fire, and symbolizes the excitement, love, energy, desire, and power that smokers experience. According to researchers, yellow represents disease and high adrenaline levels, indicative of the energy smokers feel. Blue is associated with openness, relaxation, and creativity, reflecting the sense of relaxation and happiness smokers often claim to experience. Green traditionally symbolizes nature, the environment, and vitality. Researchers argue that green represents the basis of nature and advocate for quitting smoking by contrasting it with green’s association with carcinogens.

The use of pink, which generally signifies creativity, beauty, and love, is repurposed by researchers to indicate a good life versus a sick one, using it as a sign of ammonia, a toxic substance used for various purposes.

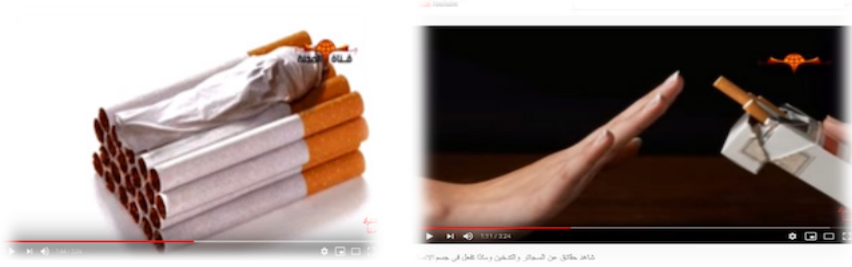
The video also features industrial materials related to cigarettes, such as ammonia, which is commonly used for cleaning toilets, and nicotine, which is an addictive substance used as an insecticide. Tar is highlighted for causing bad breath, yellowing of teeth, gum disease, and other issues, while methanol, a dangerous solvent, poses immediate health risks. Additionally, wax acid or citric acid, saturated with carbon from animal and vegetable fats, and cadmium, used in batteries, paints, alloys, and as a byproduct of butane gas combustion, are mentioned. These substances negatively impact the respiratory system and bones and are classified as carcinogens.

Figure 02: Illustrating the Dangers of Smoking and Its Effects on the Human Body



شاهد حركتك من المنصات والتطبيقات وشاركنا بطلان في جسمك

Figure 03: Slow Death Icon of Smoking by Comparison



The third clip begins with a person rejecting a pack of cigarettes, which highlights a paradox: avoiding smoking to prevent the severe damage it causes to the body. The campaign creator employed a paradoxical approach to contrast smokers with non-smokers. This clip also advocates for exercise to stimulate blood circulation and improve respiratory function, as well as to cleanse the lungs of toxins accumulated from smoking.

Additionally, the campaign compares a normal person with a smoker, showing that smokers generally have shorter lifespans compared to athletes. The clip concludes with a striking scene depicting the slow death of a smoker. This powerful visual shows a bed made of cigarettes with a shrouded figure representing a deceased person.

Figure 04: Preventive Measures Against Smoking



Figure 03: Slow Death Icon of Smoking by Comparison



The third clip begins with a person rejecting a pack of cigarettes, highlighting a paradox: staying away from smoking due to its severe health risks. The campaign creator uses this paradox to contrast the smoker with non-smokers. This clip also promotes exercise to enhance blood circulation, improve respiratory function, and cleanse the lungs of toxins from smoking.

The campaign compares the financial cost of smoking with the benefits of using that money for other purposes, suggesting that spending on cigarettes is essentially wasting money on a harmful habit. The clip includes a powerful image of a woman smoking and leaving her children behind, who are depicted with expressions of sadness and concern over their mother's potential death due to smoking.

2.3 Interpretation of the Implications of the Media Campaign “Smoking, Slow Death”

The video starts with a person lighting a cigarette, followed by the channel's logo and the video search website. The campaign then presents the chemical composition of cigarettes, focusing on nicotine and other harmful substances. It uses a color-coded chart to illustrate various chemicals in cigarettes: red for 400 substances, yellow for 400 toxic substances, green for 40 carcinogens, light blue for carbon, pink for ammonia, and dark blue for formaldehyde.

Next, the video depicts the harmful ingredients in cigarettes, such as ammonia (a toilet cleaner) and nicotine (an insecticide). The second segment features a 3D visualization of a person smoking, showing the internal effects on the organs, particularly the brain and lungs, highlighting how toxic substances spread throughout the body.

The third part contrasts a smoker with a non-smoker, emphasizing the negative health impacts of smoking, including the potential for heart attacks and other severe diseases. The clip concludes with a poignant image of a bed made of cigarettes, with a deceased person depicted, reinforcing the message of smoking leading to death.

The final segment shows the impact of smoking on pregnant women, highlighting risks like lung cancer, heart attacks, skin cancer, and oral cancer. It includes a dramatic scene where a doctor splits a smoker's brain to show polluted blood flowing out.

3. Results and Discussion

This list presents key findings from a psychological analysis of media activities related to smoking awareness. The conclusions highlight the various ways in which media campaigns, particularly those on platforms like YouTube, influence public perception and behavior regarding smoking. Through a combination of multimedia elements and emotional appeals, these campaigns not only enhance awareness of health risks but also correct misconceptions and promote adherence to healthier lifestyles. The analysis underscores the importance of semiotic interpretation, emotional engagement, and psychoanalytic methods in deconstructing the messages conveyed, ultimately aiming to persuade individuals to change their unhealthy habits. Digital platforms play a crucial role in amplifying these efforts by reaching a wider audience and reinforcing the dangers of smoking.

Through the psychological analysis of smoking media activities, the following conclusions are drawn:

- **Pathological Analysis:** Media activities on YouTube play a significant role in altering individuals’ behaviors and enhancing their awareness of health risks.
- **Campaign Effectiveness:** The “No Smoking, Slow Death” campaign effectively changes misconceptions, prioritizes public health, and emphasizes the importance of evaluating health goals.
- **Psychological Insights:** Smoking-related media activities demonstrate how to correctly follow health practices and maintain well-being.
- **Multimedia Impact:** The combination of sound, image, and text in the campaign strengthens adherence to health values and social behavior.
- **Semiotic Interpretation:** The campaign uses audiovisual elements to create effective behavior patterns and educational content in health promotion.
- **Emotional Appeal:** The campaign’s use of emotional appeal enriches the rhetorical impact, helping viewers understand the danger of smoking and improving their ability to address unhealthy behaviors.
- **Psychoanalytic Methods:** Analyzing implicit and significant meanings helps deconstruct codes and convey accurate information, aiming to persuade the public to change their behavior.

- **Digital Influence:** Digital platforms like YouTube effectively promote social and personal health by illustrating the chronic effects of smoking, which impacts the respiratory system and increases the risk of sudden death.

Conclusion

In conclusion, promoting health awareness within the information society is of paramount importance, as health remains a fundamental priority. Countries like Algeria continue to face significant health challenges, often exacerbated by insufficient public awareness. It is crucial to target young people, especially those active on social media, to foster preventive behaviors and encourage healthier lifestyles. Effective communication strategies should aim to shape individuals' habits by positively influencing their beliefs and attitudes, ultimately contributing to better public health outcomes.

Moreover, the role of digital platforms in health communication cannot be overstated. Social media, with its wide reach and interactive nature, offers an unparalleled opportunity to engage the public, particularly younger generations, in health-related conversations. By leveraging these platforms, health campaigns can disseminate accurate information quickly and address misinformation, which is often prevalent online. Integrating innovative digital tools with traditional awareness efforts can enhance the overall impact, creating a more informed and health-conscious society. This approach not only encourages individual responsibility but also fosters a collective effort towards improving public health.

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the emoticons and implicit connotations of health campaign content on YouTube using semiological analysis, relying on the asymptotic integration methods of French semiologists Christian Metz and Roland Barthes. The goal is to highlight the health-related meanings manifested in the various audiovisual formats under study. By applying the semiological analysis methodology to the audiovisual format represented by the media campaign titled "Smoking... Slow Death" posted on YouTube, we conclude that deep reading of the format contributes directly to aligning the media campaign with health values and societal behaviors, particularly through its multimedia features. This campaign effectively creates a behavioral model that serves as a cornerstone for any educational and awareness efforts in the health field.

Keywords

health awareness, ico, media campaign, digitization, semiotics

مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة التحليلية إلى استكشاف الرموز التعبيرية والدلالات الضمنية لمحتوى الحملات الصحية على موقع يوتيوب من خلال الاستعانة بالتحليل السيميولوجي، بالاعتماد على ما يُعرف بالتكامل المقارباتي للباحثين الفرنسيين كريستيان ميتز ورولان بارث، من أجل تسليط الضوء على تجليات المعنى الصحي في الأنساق السمعية البصرية المختلفة التي تم دراستها. من خلال تطبيق منهجية التحليل السيميولوجي على النسق السمعي البصري المتمثل في الحملة الإعلامية التي تحمل شعار "التدخين... الموت البطيء"، المنشورة على يوتيوب، توصلنا إلى أن القراءة المعمقة للنسق تسهم بشكل مباشر في توافق الحملة الإعلامية مع القيم الصحية والسلوك المجتمعي، خاصة من خلال اعتمادها على خصائص الوسائط المتعددة. تمكنت هذه الحملة من إنشاء نموذج سلوكي قوي يُعد حجر الأساس لأي جهد تعليمي وتوعوي في مجال الصحة.

كلمات مفتاحية

الوعي الصحي، الأيقونة، الحملة الإعلامية، الرقمنة، السيميولوجيا

Résumé

À travers cette étude, nous visons à examiner les émoticônes et les connotations implicites des campagnes de santé diffusées sur YouTube en utilisant l'analyse sémiologique, en nous appuyant sur les méthodes d'intégration asymptotique des chercheurs de l'École française de sémiologie, à savoir Christian Metz et Roland Barthes. L'objectif est de mettre en lumière les manifestations du sens sanitaire dans les différents formats audiovisuels étudiés. En appliquant la méthodologie d'analyse sémiologique au format

audiovisuel de la campagne médiatique intitulée “Fumer... La mort lente”, publiée sur YouTube, nous concluons qu’une lecture approfondie du format contribue directement à aligner la campagne médiatique avec les valeurs de santé et les comportements sociétaux, notamment grâce à ses caractéristiques multimédia. Cette campagne parvient à créer un modèle comportemental solide qui devient la pierre angulaire de tout effort d’éducation et de sensibilisation dans le domaine de la santé.

Mots-clés

sensibilisation à la santé, Icône, campagne médiatique, numérisation, sémiotique