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Drug Culture & Physical Activity

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 In contemporary society, the intersection of drug culture and physical appearance is prominently shown in various advertisements. These ads often employ persuasive tactics to appeal to specific audiences, shaping perceptions around drugs, fitness, and beauty. By examining these advertisements, we can discern the claims made, identify target audiences, and explore the primary themes that run through them.

Advertisements related to drugs often make bold claims about enhancing physical appearance, performance, and overall well-being. Many suggest that the use of certain substances—ranging from anabolic steroids to supplements—will lead to significant improvements in muscle mass, weight loss, and aesthetic appeal. For instance, ads for bodybuilding supplements might claim, “Achieve your dream physique in just 30 days!” or “Unleash your inner athlete!” These statements not only promote the effectiveness of the product but also perpetuate the notion that physical attractiveness and athletic prowess are attainable through drug use.

The target audience for these advertisements primarily includes young adults and teenagers, particularly those engaged in fitness culture. This demographic is often looking for quick fixes to enhance their physical appearance and performance. Within this group, there is a notable focus on individuals involved in bodybuilding, fitness, and competitive sports. Body builders are the ones most often targeted in advertisements and commercials. The drive to be as big as you can often leads body builders to taking different types of drugs to help them make gains. Advertisements often appeal to both men and women, although the strategies used may differ. Men are typically targeted with ads highlighting strength and muscle gain, while women may see ads emphasizing weight loss and toning. Majority of ads that I saw emphasized weight loss as the major highlight towards women while the main highlight for men was gaining muscle and looking “fit”.

Yes, athletes are a significant part of the target audience for many drug-related advertisements. Professional and amateur athletes are often portrayed in these ads to demonstrate the effectiveness of the product. By showcasing well-known athletes who embody the ideals of strength and fitness, these ads create aspirational figures for consumers. However, the implicit message often suggests that achieving similar results requires the use of the advertised substances, potentially normalizing the use of performance-enhancing drugs in competitive sports.

An analysis of drug-related advertisements reveals a distinct gender divide in their appeal. Many ads cater specifically to men, focusing on themes of muscle gain, strength, and dominance. These ads often feature muscular men in competitive settings, reinforcing traditional masculine ideals. Conversely, ads targeting women typically emphasize beauty, slimness, and fitness. For example, advertisements for weight-loss supplements may feature women engaged in yoga or running, promoting an idealized image of femininity. While both genders are targeted, the messaging and imagery differ significantly, reflecting societal norms around gender and body image.

The transparency of ingredient listings varies across advertisements. Some ads explicitly mention the active ingredients of their products, particularly in the realm of supplements. Commonly featured ingredients may include creatine, whey protein, caffeine, and various herbal extracts known for their performance-enhancing properties. However, many ads intentionally obscure the details about potentially harmful substances, particularly in cases involving anabolic steroids or illicit drugs. This lack of transparency raises ethical concerns regarding consumer awareness and safety.

Several recurring themes can be identified in drug-related advertisements. One of the most prevalent themes is the idea of transformation. Many ads promote the concept that using their product will lead to a drastic change in physical appearance, promising quick and impressive results. This theme is often accompanied by imagery of before-and-after comparisons, which can be misleading and foster unrealistic expectations.

Another theme is the notion of aspiration and success. Advertisements frequently depict successful individuals, models, or influencers—who have achieved their goals with the product. This creates an aspirational narrative that equates drug use with success and desirability.

Finally, there is an underlying theme of community and belonging. Many ads create a sense of camaraderie among users, suggesting that using these products will not only enhance physical appearance but also foster social connections within the fitness or athletic community.

 In conclusion, I think the advertisement of drug use and physical activity is a double edge sword. I think as men and women get older the use of drugs has been used to help maintain health or to help lose weight. It can be beneficial but using them at a young age can be damaging. As a high school coach, it is a constant struggle talking to my young athletes about products they can take to better themselves. I am constantly researching things on my own to better myself and my own understanding to help my athletes make the smartest choices they can make.