Sunny Days Ahead: Messages During a Pandemic: Creative Strategies and Themes in Health and Wellness Public Service Ads by the Ad Council

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Meenakshi Trichur Venkitasubramanian entitled "Sunny Days Ahead: Messages During a Pandemic: Creative Strategies and Themes in Health and Wellness Public Service Ads by the Ad Council." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication and Information.

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
SUNNY DAYS AHEAD-MESSAGES DURING A PANDEMIC: CREATIVE STRATEGIES AND THEMES IN HEALTH AND WELLNESS PUBLIC SERVICE ADS BY THE AD COUNCIL

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Meenakshi Trichur Venkitasubramanian

December 2021
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

My mom, for being a strong and gentle soul, for always trusting the heights I could reach, for all her love and prayers that has kept me going and alive.

My dad, the most dedicated and hardworking man I have ever met and for teaching me to always stay humble and grounded.

My Arvind, for being the best partner. I love you and thank you for inspiring me to do better.

My brother, for never giving up on me and always being there.

Finally, in loving memory of my Prarthana Maya, my one-year-old angel daughter, left me so early but forever in my heart and inspires me to be a better human being every day.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Eric Haley, Dr. Courtney Childers, Dr. Sally McMillan, and Dr. Dan Flint. This dissertation journey has been made richer by their support and feedback.

I am so grateful for having Dr. Eric Haley as my advisor and chair, who supported me through my most challenging period and helped me find my path with my dissertation. Through the many setbacks that I faced; his vision enabled me to finish my dissertation. The kindness and support he has shown me are greatly appreciated. It has been a blessing to be a student of his (especially my favorite class on Advertising and Society) that has taught me lessons I will carry with me my entire life.

I am grateful to Dr. Courtney Childers, who has always been encouraging and positive in every conversation. Thank you for always rooting for me. I am grateful to Dr. McMillan for accepting to be on my committee and for her invaluable input during the dissertation defense and dissertation process.

Also, thank you to Dr. Dan Flint. I am glad I took his class on qualitative marketing methods, which has helped me fall in love with research. The readings in that class included CCT research, which I would like to work on someday. His stories about his life and his research experiences have inspired me, truly broadening my perspectives.

In addition, I would like to thank my favorite professor from the program, Dr. Ron Taylor (who has retired now), for making the program so enjoyable for me. Working as his teaching assistant, writing papers, and taking his classes has helped me shape my
worldview and given me new perspectives. Thanks to his sense of humor, challenging classes, exciting assignments, and brilliant conversations. Furthermore, I am thankful for learning about the theoretical frameworks of mass communication and the strategy wheel, which is the life and core of this dissertation. I have found his courses to be some of the most insightful and enjoyable ones in the entire program. I have enjoyed being mentored by him during my program's initial few years, and I still cherish those conversations and lessons that provide insights into advertising, research, education, and life.

Also, I wish to thank my other excellent University of Tennessee professors, like Dr. Catherine Luther, Dr. Beth Avery, Dr. Michael Palenchar, Dr. Roxane Hovland, Professor Robyn Blakeman, Dr. Rentsch, Dr. Kupritz, and Dr. Nick Geidner. As a graduate student, I am grateful to Margaret Taylor from CCI's Associate Dean's office for her patience and kindness in helping me with all my questions and administrative problems and making it easy for me to complete my dissertation while working at a distance from Chicago. The University of Tennessee faculty and staff deserve my gratitude for providing me with this excellent opportunity and all they do to support higher education.

My family also deserves my thanks: my parents, parents-in-law, Arvind, Srinath, and Ishwarya, who have supported me as I have pursued my dissertation. I have been fortunate to have family who have been incredibly supportive of my journey and every little progress. I want to thank Arvind for being a solid support system during the writing process. I would not have been able to reach this point without his strong belief in me. My sisters-in-law, Priya and Bommi, from Texas, have been my girl power, and I appreciate
their calls and texts. Thanks also go out to my friends who have always wished me the best in everything I do. Finally, a special thanks go out to LaVerne and Debbie for being a constant source of support and encouragement throughout my Ph.D. journey.

My acknowledgment is not complete if I don’t thank my handsome little nephew Adarsh for making the past year a lot better with his sweet giggles, smiles, and playfulness. Someday, in the future, I hope that he will be able to complete his dissertation, where he can write about how his name appeared on a dissertation even before he was a year old.
ABSTRACT

Public Service Advertising is an essential field of study because of its ability to impact and shape public behavior and community changes. Historically, the advertising industry has come together during the times of world war to form an association, the Ad Council, to help create awareness to the public. Over the past 75 years, the Ad Council has contributed to the various causes by communicating and advertising to encourage better habits and behavior. The Ad Council has collaborated with CDC and COVID Collaborative to communicate the right messages about coronavirus response and COVID-19 vaccine during this pandemic. The purpose of this dissertation is to study the creative strategies employed by the health and wellness messages by the Ad Council, and this study proposes to understand the differences in the ways different public health messages are communicated to society. This dissertation uses Taylor’s Six-Segment strategy wheel as a framework to understand the creative strategies of the television advertisements of health and wellness PSAs. The study uses the current television advertisements available on the Ad Council’s website to focus on the current pandemic communication strategies. The results indicate that the dominant messaging strategy concerning COVID-19 ads utilized informational (ration, routine and acute) strategies to communicate their messages, similar to how messages for other diseases are communicated. It is important to note that the COVID-19 ads also used transformational messages (social and ego) to communicate, which was different from other health PSAs. The COVID-19 ads were also empowering
in nature. Thus, the dissertation also explores the various themes used in the overall messaging of public health concerns.

*Keywords:* PSA, Ad Council, Health Communication, Health Messaging, Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel, Creative Strategies, Thematic Analysis.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of the Study

In January 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Novel Corona Virus-COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern. In another two months, it was declared as a pandemic. The entire world grapples with the devastating social, cultural, economic, and health effects and is still learning to cope with this pandemic. As of March 2021, over 124 million cases of COVID-19, with the US alone accounting for over 30 million cases. With more than half a million recorded deaths, the COVID-19 is one of the most challenging pandemics this country has faced. Thus, the significance of public health has become all-encompassing.

American Public Health Association (APHA) defines public health as promoting and protecting the people and community’s health. Public health focuses on the prevention and containment of diseases amongst the population. Public health also focuses on creating awareness and spreading information needed to empower people with information while promoting healthy communities. People who work in public health focus on sharing information to inform, educate, and empower them. Public health surveillance dates back to many centuries when the goal was to protect the population against the spread of infectious diseases. Langmuir (1963) defines the concept of public health surveillance as a systematic analysis, interpretation of specific data, and sharing that data with those responsible for helping with prevention and control of the disease.
Public health is a process in which the authorities, government, and community work towards mobilizing and engaging the resources from various levels to create and maintain conditions conducive to helping people stay healthy (Detels and Breslow, 2004). The major areas covered in public health include policy, practice, and research. Public health is inherently interdisciplinary and draws from various fields: biomedicine, genetics, health promotion, nutrition, organizational development, social sciences, marketing, pharmaceutical sciences, psychology, and biostatistics (Jansen et al., 2010).

Among the different fields mentioned above, social science, marketing, and health promotion fall under advertising and communication. Advertising plays a critical role in shaping many facets of society, including culture, economics, and politics. Thus, advertising indeed has its impacts on different sectors of society. Moreover, given its power, this industry can, directly and indirectly influence and shape consumer behavior, decisions, and even public policies (Wallack and Montgomery, 1992). So, how do advertising and its allied industry influence and impact public health?

Advertising messages can help promote products and services that might cause health issues and negate the signs of progress and policies to better public health, like alcohol, tobacco/cigarette, fast-food companies, obesity, drug abuse, chronic health conditions, and vaccination and prevention (Dorfman and Wallack, 1993). It can also play the role of public service ads, combat misinformation, and provide the option to do the right things for a healthy and safe life (Dorfman and Wallack, 1993; Pechmann and Catlin, 2016). Public health advertising is an inexpensive way to provide information to persuade people
to change their behavior (or not). Research indicates how misinformation about smoking and drinking leads to ignorance and making harmful decisions, especially among at-risk populations. That means a large audience would benefit from Public Service Advertisement (Schudson, Rabin, and Sugarman, 1993).

Advertising impacts public health and policies and makes it essential to continue research in the field of public health messages and advertising. For example, while the US was battling the coronavirus pandemic, advertising has helped communicate critical information appropriately to the public. During the initial part of the pandemic, the political climate was rife with dichotomous views, a deep mistrust in how the government provided information, and other logistical and social challenges, which made it challenging to handle coronavirus. Naturally, the advertising industry stepped up to create several advertising messages through the Ad Council and communicate essential and timely information about how communities can stay safe during the pandemic and prevent further transmission and spread of the virus.

This dissertation focuses on the current campaigns on the Ad Council’s website, specifically with the health and wellness category. Thus, the coronavirus response messages, and COVID-19 vaccine campaigns are also part of the study. These ads will be compared with the ads focused on other health campaigns. Further, it will also examine the various creative strategies employed by the Ad Council to communicate information to the public regarding the pandemic.
1.2. Public Health and a Pandemic

Public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic emphasize the importance of information and education of public health information that will be helpful to the public. Such information that communicates the need to address problems and help create behavioral and community changes. For instance, effective public health communication has played a critical role in sanitation and other health and safety programs in communities across the globe (Qazi and Anwar, 2021). Never has the role of public health communication and education been more critical than COVID-19, where information relayed (about disease spread, sanitation, and others) has been crucial in reducing the overall mortality and severe infections despite the overall transmissibility and infections across the world (Udow-Phillips and Lantz, 2020).

Any public health concern (and a pandemic in particular) will cause enormous strain and pressure in the healthcare system. Given the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the strain that the healthcare system faced is only palpable. Public health institutions such as hospitals and laboratories needed testing equipment; an effective supply chain was necessary to get protective equipment (such as ventilators, specimen swab collection, testing) for doctors and healthcare workers, and to manage the logistics of getting people tested, and to research and analyze data about the virus itself. Moreover, with concerted misinformation campaigns spreading across various swaths of the public, leading to widespread hoarding of many essential household and medical supplies, such behavior stressed the entire country’s critical infrastructure, leading to chaos and social
unrest (Brennen et al., 2021; Pennycook et al., 2020; Roozenbeek et al., 2020; Vraga and Bode, 2021).

Thus, with a pandemic like COVID-19, many things had to be controlled, planned, and studied. Initially, the challenge was to implement coordinated and consistent stay-at-home orders, scale-up testing operations, and improve healthcare capacity to help deal with increasing cases (Guest, Del Rio, and Sanchez, 2020). Public health officials use many tools and techniques to deal with pandemics. For example, they restricted the movement of infected and symptomatic individuals, quarantining, providing travel advisories, taking care of livestock, animals, culling animal stock in case of transmissions, and preventing animal-human (and vice-versa) transmissions (Poutanen and McGeer, 2004). Unfortunately, implementing such restrictive measures resulted in resistance from the public since it interfered with their freedom and curbed economic activity, which forced many state governments to reopen their economies rapidly (Habib, 2020; Kai et al., 2020; Guan et al., 2020; and Das et al., 2020). Ultimately, this ‘greed’ to reopen economies has also resulted in devastating consequences, as seen in countries like Brazil, where public health infrastructure is currently under severe strain due to the unchecked spread of the virus (Castro et al., 2021; deSouza et al., 2020).

However, neither pandemic nor restrictions are recent. These measures followed for the SARS outbreak in Canada in 2002-2003 also had difficulties dealing with the home quarantine rules set for ten days (Naylor et al., 2004). As per the World Health Organization, only the least restrictive options and measures must be employed to help the
public health issues (Smith and Upshur, 2019). This means the best measures have also to be based on the context of confinement, addressing mental health issues, and offering psychological support for any of the quarantining rules (Smith and Upshur, 2019; Silva and Smith, 2015).

Given that there is a constant change in understanding the pathogen and its effects and characteristics, the measures and steps are taken to combat pandemics are also not constant. It is real-time, and hence, public health officials and practitioners are constantly striving to develop and change norms and restrictions to keep the public safe. Each time a pandemic occurs, the response is based on the predictability of where, when, and how the virus would spread. The measures also depend on healthcare workers, allocation of resources, governance, ethics (Smith and Upshur, 2019).

1.3. Advertising’s Role in Public Health Messages

Advertising is persuasive and pervasive -therefore, it plays a significant role in selling ideas, services, consumer products, and behaviors. In the world of public health messaging, advertisers try to sell ‘behavior’ to the consumers/public. Dorfman and Wallack (1993) mention that selling health behavior is not the same as selling products for consumers. Though the individual is addressed in the ad messages, it is to be noted that there are many other layers to this aspect of public health. Thus, public health advertising is one of the most used mass media tools as it has a broader reach and could be persuasive.

Ironically, advertising is the same medium used by fast-food sellers, alcohol manufacturers, and the cigarette and tobacco industry to sell their products. It is the same
medium that PSAs use to counter the negatives caused by unhealthy eating, alcohol, cigarette, and many others. One of the barriers to the effectiveness of a Public Service Ad is the advertising time compared to the time and space taken by commercial ads (Dorfman and Wallack, 1993).

The appeals and framing of public service ads also shape its effectiveness. For example, a focus group study studied the appeals used in road safety ads amongst young people. They found that using positive emotional appeals in the road safety PSAs was more persuasive than negative emotional appeals (Lewis et al., 2007). In addition, positive emotional appeals were effective in promoting the theme of prevention. Lewis et al., (2007) also explored the theoretical and empirical evidence on the effectiveness of fear appeal to improve driver safety. The results highlighted that fear appeals were important for attraction but its contribution to behavior change was not as critical. Appeals have also explored the importance of humor in public health messages. In a study by Hendriks and Jannsen (2018), the researchers found that among the male audiences, preferred humor in health messages and male audiences responded better to those messages that used higher threat along with humor. Women on the other hand preferred low threat humor messages.

Advertising’s role is not restricted to what kind of appeals are used in these PSA’s but also source credibility on health-related PSA. In a study conducted to understand the source credibility effectiveness of health-related PSA compared to the electronic word of mouth, Kareklas, Muehling, and Weber (2015) found that relevant expertise of online commenters shaped the effectiveness of PSAs advertising messages and their perceived
credibility. A very recent study conducted by Stead et al. (2019) in the UK to understand if the mass media campaigns in six health-related topics – alcohol, diet, drugs, physical activity, sexual and reproductive health, and tobacco- had a difference in its effectiveness based on the target population. The study found that the target group did impact the change in health behavior. This paper performed a meta-review of primary studies on each of these media campaigns and concluded with a mixed result regarding how these different campaigns were adequate based on their target group. The study also found that for physical, sexual, and reproductive health, there was an effective change in behavior with the mass media campaigns, concluding that long, intensive campaigns were more effective than shorter ones.

Framing messages also shaped the response or end behavior amongst consumers. In a study that examined public perception of obesity-related health messages, the researchers tried to understand the motivating and appealing messages. Those messages that gave a positive framing and healthy behavioral change favored those that criticized and stigmatized obesity. (Puhl, Peterson, and Luedicke, 2013).

Thus, advertising has a decisive role in public health messages- both consumption and creation. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the various facets of the public health messages that cater to COVID-19.

1.4. Covid Communication

One of the essential parts of public health emergencies is crisis or risk communication. Any disaster-manmade or otherwise (such as epidemics and pandemics) will evoke mental,
emotional, and physical trauma to a large group of people (Andrulis et al., 2007; Glik, 2007; Van Ommeren et al., 2005). Lack of information about the nature of the threat, remedies, fatality, and severe health and economic disarray, media hype, lack of time, and public fear are all some challenges that public health practitioners and advocates face (Smith, 2006; Abrams and Greenhawt, 2020). These dictate the ways they strategize emergency or risk communication. Such variables also pressure public health practitioners and institutions to provide coherent, consistent, credible, and timely communication to handle and avert the crisis (Lin et al., 2016). Viral pandemics such as COVID-19, H1N1, MERS, SARS have resulted in large-scale and rather sudden outbreaks. These also need much strategizing to help create awareness, empower the people, promote healthy behavior without creating paranoia or uncertainty. Thus, messaging strategies and how ads communicate critical information at the time of need are crucial to handle and deal with pandemics (Kim et al., 2021; Vraga and Jacobsen, 2020).

1.5. Resistance to Public Health Messages

Public health messages have a broad impact on how they affect health behaviors. Especially in the context of ongoing pandemics such as C-19, messaging strategies play a vital role in saving lives. Even though effective public messaging strategies can potentially alter individual behaviors (e.g., the 3W strategy for avoiding COVID-19, wearing your mask, washing your hands, and watching the distance), sometimes, these communication campaigns can inadvertently result in the opposite behaviors. Therefore, researchers have used psychological reactance theory and developed critical health communication methods
to understand how public health messages can build resistance to the messages’ intent amongst their audience (Hall et al., 2017).

Reports indicate the health disparities in the United States, which can be due to socio-economic disparities, racial, ethnic, mortality, morbidity, and risky behaviors (Gollust and Cappella, 2014).

Whenever people are asked to change their unhealthy behaviors, they resist persuasive efforts. Health messages often trigger high levels of negative effects that will dissuade the choice of healthy behaviors. Although the advertising messages focus on creating changes that are conducive to establishing healthy habits and patterns, negative emotions deter and often resist these messages (Brown, 2001).

Self-affirmation theory states that people are motivated to an overall sense of self-integrity that the health messages interfere with their perception of self and thus threaten their integrity (DiBello, Neighbors, and Ammar, 2015). Research also shows how consumers detest explicit health messages that encourage healthy eating habits in comparison to subtle health messages. (Wagner et al., 2015).

1.6. Ad Council’s History and Purpose

Advertising has played a significant role in shaping the American dream. For example, during World War II, advertising, publishing, and broadcasting shaped how the war was strategized and even created a new type of advertising, namely public service advertising. What began as a messaging during World War II by the advertising industry to help the industry communicate information to help the public and unite them during the tough
times, Ad Council today is, therefore, a treasure trove of some fantastic campaigns that have shaped America.

From 1942 up until now, the Ad Council covers campaigns on health, the environment, society, safety, and creating new values. For instance, the Ad Council created campaigns to create awareness on polio, Peace Corps, seat belt safety, vaccination drives, drunken driving, forest fire, and alcohol and tobacco addiction. The Ad Council thus unites the industry together and is an excellent platform for improving its presence and value amongst consumers and shaping public opinions. It is a tremendous win-win. These campaigns focus on what the public, individuals, and collective communities can do to help public health and welfare’s overall growth and safety. One of the most famous and still running campaigns is the Smokey campaign focused on fire safety and wildfire prevention. It is considered one of the iconic and memorable PSA (O’Barr, 2006).

Ad Council is a non-profit organization that chooses campaigns carefully and evaluates its purpose from all aspects. The Council stays away from politics, religion, and advocacy campaigns. The Council’s mission focuses on health, education, families, communities, and safety issues. The choice of campaigns is based on how the issue aligns with the mission of the Ad Council. The budget is also considered before deciding to go with the campaign idea (Melillo, 2013).

Once the campaign is decided, then the Council signs a contract with the client requesting the effort. Agencies that fall under the national firms ready to do the campaign for free are chosen, and then labor, account management, and ad creation are all not billed
for the campaign. However, the third party or contract services are charged for printing, TV directors, and crew. Depending on the campaign’s media mix, the client will receive a series of ads to run in donated space and airtime on network television, cable, radio, newspapers, magazines, and websites. The media companies have the liberty to decide if they should run the campaign or not, depending on their available commercial advertisers and where they are placed. This is the most significant limitation for public service advertisements to reach the public (Melillo, 2013).

With changing times, the media mix for these campaigns has also evolved, and there are social media and online campaigns included in the mix. Given the free airtime offered by the network and space-time on television.

1.7. Research Questions

Although research on public service advertising is widely available, there is still an unaddressed gap in understanding the message and creative strategies of public health campaigns used by the Ad Council, specifically focused on the recent coronavirus initiatives. Thus, this study will yield important insights into the contribution of the Ad Council and the advertising industry in handling emerging public health crises such as COVID-19. In particular, this research will answer the following questions.

**RQ1:** What are the creative strategies used in the public service ads by the Ad Council?

a) What strategies are used in the coronavirus response and COVID-19 vaccine campaigns by the Ad Council?
b) How are these COVID-19 campaigns (both coronavirus response and vaccine campaigns) compared to the other public health campaigns by the Ad Council?

**RQ2:** What are the overall themes seen in the public service ads?

### 1.7.1. Methodology

To understand the creative strategies, this study will use the theoretical framework of the six-segment strategy wheel. The six-segment strategy wheel uses the ritual and transmission communication models, FCB grid, and Kotler’s buying behavior model and forms an all-encompassing 6-segment strategy wheel (Taylor, 1999). This wheel has been used to study viral advertising messages (Golan and Zaidner, 2008), to understand communication strategies used in cosmetic websites (Ahn, Wu, and Taylor, 2013), the message strategies of direct-to-consumer Pharma ads (Tsai and Lancaster, 2012) and many more. This six-segment strategy wheel will provide the tools to qualitatively analyze the creative strategies employed by the public health messages on the Ad council’s website.

The second research question is to understand the themes present in the overall messages of these public service ads. For that, this dissertation will use a Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis is an appropriate tool for qualitative, interpretive research. All television ads available during the period of this study on the Ad council’s health and wellness page was considered to be part of this dissertation study.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a widely used qualitative research method that follows the six stages of analysis: familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, definition, and naming of themes, and production of the report
(Braun and Clarke, 2006, Terry et al., 2017). The ads will be studied entirely and include the visual, verbal, and other cues available in them.

This method systematically identifies, organizes, and offers insights into patterns of meanings (themes) across data. The process helps the researcher to see and make sense of collective and shared meanings and experiences. TA focuses not just on one data set, instead tries to decipher the common theme and topic by making sense of the commonalities in the entire data pool. TA is a flexible method and helps focus on the data and let the data speak to the researcher, understanding the phenomenon.

1.7.2. Dissertation Organization

The first chapter of this dissertation relates to the study’s purpose, the research questions, scope, and general overview of the subject. The chapter also discusses the historical perspective of the Ad Council and public service advertising and the methodology used. Finally, it will discuss the scope and significance of this study in the current time.

The second chapter of the study comprises a historical overview of the academic side of the research topic. This will discuss the topics of advertising messages and the various ways in which this is understood. This chapter aims to build the literature review around the research and understand the gap and contribution of this dissertation.

The third chapter in this dissertation discusses the research design and method used for this research. It will elaborate on the data selection and collection process and write about this dissertation’s paradigmatic perspectives and theoretical frameworks. It will also
elaborate on Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel and its application in academic research and supporting studies. The thematic analysis method also will be discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter examines the Ad Council website’s actual advertisements under the public health messaging category. It will also examine the ads under coronavirus campaigns which are also part of the health message category. This chapter is crucial in understanding the roles these kinds of advertising messages play in the ad industry. In addition, this chapter aims to understand the message strategies employed by these public health campaigns and see how the coronavirus campaigns are compared to the other current campaigns.

The fifth chapter discusses the study’s findings, draws meaningful conclusions from the research, and demonstrates how the findings apply to the larger fields of public health messaging. The chapter will also elucidate the specific themes found in these ads to reflect how these message strategies are executed. The chapter then concludes with limitations and ideas for further study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Public Service Advertising

One of the oldest public service advertisements from the Health Department of New York was the 1918 pandemic. It was a black and white drawing reminiscent of the ads from those days that had a man with a nose of a showerhead as he sneezed. The message read, “How disease is spread? Sneeze but don’t scatter.” The message implored the need to cover one’s nose and mouth while sneezing. This message was meant to create awareness, change, and shape public behavior like the current pandemic.

Public Service Advertising (PSAs) focuses on shaping and influencing people’s beliefs and habits to influence decisions that create new and supportive behavior. The ads that are targeted to the benefit of the public are considered Public Service Advertisements. In the US, the Ad Council is synonymous with PSAs. Around the early 1940s, ad agencies, direct-mail firms, printing, outdoor advertising, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other members of the ad industry joined hands to incorporate the Ad Council to create these kinds of awareness and changes in the public.

Though a political and economic climate ensued during World War II helped create the Ad Council, they have continued to contribute to the American public. Some of their campaigns have found their place in the history of advertising, like the Smokey bear campaign for forest fires, Crying Indian, Keep America Beautiful, and so on. However, these are not just memorable ad images or slogans. Instead, they have spanned generations to create public awareness.
They have been instrumental in persuading people to change, sometimes with years of constant messaging (Melillo, 2013). Over these seven decades of existence as an organization, the Ad Council brings the industry and the agencies together to create the most inspiring messages of change to the public.

After their effort to address Polio vaccines in the early '50s, the council has brought the industry together to address the vaccine skepticism and hesitance by creating a COVID-19 vaccine campaign. This campaign is set to be one of the most extensive public education campaigns in the history of the United States. The Ad Council has partnered with Covid Collaborative, a National Assembly with a diverse group of experts in public health, education, and the economy for this initiative. This $50 million campaign aimed to ensure that the American public was made aware and informed about the vaccine while creating a positive mindset to accept the vaccine and prevent severe complications from the evolving strains of COVID-19.

This chapter will explore the research available about Public Service advertisements and research on health communication to the public. It will also explore how health is presented to the public, such as Direct-to-consumer advertising. Since the dissertation’s focus is to make sense of the creative strategies of these PSAs by the Ad Council, the chapter will also elaborate on the various typologies of creative strategies, advertising appeals and briefly discuss other elements that are crucial to an advertising message. As the research aims to understand the current creative strategies of the coronavirus pandemic messages, this chapter will also explore the current research in this area.
2.2 Public Service Advertisements

There is a need to mobilize the general population/society to take collective action for the public good, and advertisements that are used to provide messages that will persuade the public to act for the best of the society are public service advertisements (PSAs). For instance, Smokey Bear ads for the forest fire are an example of PSAs. World Wars have played a role in shaping the role of advertising messages to form and unite public opinions. Over the years, it has become a significant component of American mass media (O'Keefe and Reid, 1990).

PSAs focus on issues like health, environment, preventive measures, community services, educational opportunities or continuity, race, and others. However, research from the 1970s indicates a more significant portion of these PSAs have focused on health care and related messages (O'Keefe and Reid, 1990). Thus, PSAs have an important societal function, and to quote Paletz et al. (1977):

"The values they contain, the images they collectively propound of authority, and American institutions, their portrayals of nature and causes of societal problems, and the solutions they designate to those problems... public service advertising should be considered as one way in which the American public is imbued with the values and attitudes that contribute to the current functioning and stability of American political system" (Paletz, 1977).

It is important to note that PSAs are different from advocacy advertisements. PSAs deal with socially relevant issues and are non-paid messages from non-profit organizations
or the government. However, advocacy advertisements deal with socially relevant issues but are paid for by businesses or organizations (Haley, 1996).

2.3 Other Research on PSAs

In research studied to understand the interaction between personal relevance and feelings towards public service advertisement and feelings towards the issue (drunken driving) on the behavioral intention showed that personal relevance moderates the relationship between feelings towards the message and behavioral intent and the ad and behavioral intent. The findings show how the PSAs should be presented to make them personally relevant to the consumers. The personal connection to the advertised message and the intended audience would add to the effectiveness of the message (Darley and Lim, 1991).

The proliferation and popularity of Web 2.0 have shaped how the intended audience consumes the same messages via YouTube and other platforms. In a study conducted by Paek et al. (2011), the researchers studied the persuasive impact of public service YouTube videos differs from whether it was done by an expert professional or a layperson peer. For ads on child abuse, they found that the peer group's ads were more effective in enhancing attitudes towards the PSA and the issue than the one created by the expert. The effect was also higher amongst the low-involved viewers.

Research on PSAs focus on understanding the respondent's reaction to the ads and their change in their behavior. Most studies focus on the appeals that have been effective in changing behaviors. For instance, fear appeals used in specific PSA messages and their
effectiveness has been studied by Dillard et al. (1996). The study focused on PSAs on the topic of AIDS/HIV and found that variety of affects were induced by the PSAs that predicted message acceptance. Schoenbachler and Whittler (1996), also examined the reactions of adolescents to the physical and social threat appeals in drug prevention PSAs. They found that fear appeals were unnecessary in encouraging persuasion. There has been research to understand audience recall of PSAs and in a 1997 study, the researchers found that PSAs with strong emotional appeals were better remembered by the college students than the ones with rational appeal messages. The study showed that gender, ethnicity, and location also impacted the perception of messages (Lee and Davie, 1997).

Research also showed how threat appeals used in health communication can be controversial and can often result in a negative impact. However, a study that examined the impact of threat-based road safety ads on young male drivers' driving behavior shows otherwise. They found that threat-based road safety communications targeting fear and cognitive or perceived efficacy can positively impact driving behavior. However, emotions like anger would hurt the effectiveness (Carey and Sarma, 2016). Most of the studies that focused on health communication or messaging have looked at fear appeal. A meta-analysis of fear appeal effectiveness shows a positive effect of fear appeals on attitudes and behavior. The effectiveness of fear appeal increased when the messages included statements of efficacy and recommended a one-time-only behavior (concerning repeated behaviors) (Tannenbaum et al., 2015).
PSAs are not without criticism. Some argue that an advertising campaign that aims at shaping public behavior or changing public values poses practical obstacles. These criticisms argue that the money spent on advertisement could be better used by putting it back to society and using it on activities that would help or improve the situation (like law enforcement and others.). In addition, the lack of finding the best airtime/ spots for the campaigns does dampen the reach of these messages to the public (Lancaster and Lancaster, 2002). Research showed how advertising efforts to promote social causes often do not reach their desired results (Rotfeld, 1999). Wolburg et al. (1999) argued that anti-consumption messages like "do not do drugs," "do not drink and drive," that compete against the humorous and creative ads of beer brands may not incite the same interest to the intended audiences who watch it to be entertained. This side of the argument points out the lack of reach for PSAs as they compete against the creative product ads, anti-consumption messaging, desirable spots, and airtime. There is also an argument that advertising efforts to promote social causes and issues that matter to public rarely achieve the targeted level of effectiveness. This could also be because of the fact that the advertisers of public service ad messages receive spots that are often not taken desired by the regular paid advertisers (Wolburg, 2001).

2.4 Direct-to-consumer Drug Ads and Public Health

PSAs have to compete against a lot of factors like, the creatives of paid brands like alcohol, unhealthy food, tobacco and others that might not promote healthy habits and behavior. It also has to compete against the getting the right space and airtime, because
PSAs receive only the undesired spots that are not wanted by regular advertisers. In addition to this, they also have to compete against the direct-to-consumer drug ads (DTC) that take up more space and advertising spots. The United States is one of the two nations (New Zealand being the other) that allows direct-to-consumer drug ads (DTC). Ever since the first advertisement in 1981 for a prescription drug, easing restrictions in 1997, and other FDA compliances, the DTC messages have been a constant and high spending in the advertising industry. Direct-to-Consumer Advertising of the pharmaceutical industry in the United States from 2012-2020 has only grown steadily to be about 6.5 billion dollars across all media. In 2020, the DTC ads to consumers via television were around 5.4 billion dollars (Statista, Kantar Media, 2021). However, scholars have been critical of the DTC ads and their impact on the prescribing behavior and associated public health issues. These DTC ads pose a challenge to the clinicians who work with patients who are aware of these drugs through the ads and request or seek purchasing options. DTC ads are associated with higher prescribing behavior for specific health issues (like osteoarthritis or allergies) and antidepressants. These are driven by the requests and inquiries by the patients (Koch-Laking, Park, & Tweed, 2010). Their research showed that patients in the US placed more requests for prescription drugs than those from Canada. Proponents of DTC advertisements believe that these ads inform the public about their problems and available treatments and options. However, scholars believe that these ads can be misleading, and biased, and raise prescribing costs (Almasi et al., 2006). Research indicates how the increased use of new drugs advertised through DTC leads to adverse events like cardiovascular events associated
with CO2 inhibitors and the heavily advertised drugs in the US (Topol, 2004; Spence et al., 2005). Content analysis of DTC advertisements in the US also indicates that most ads showed more importance to the benefits than the risks associated with the medicines (Kaphingst et al., 2004).

Given that most advertisements attempt to convince a target audience, it is vital to have an alternate voice of preventive health care messages from a non-profit organization and the government.

2.5 Creative / Message Strategies in Advertising

Thus, this dissertation attempts to characterize how PSAs can be targeted to benefit both public and policymakers’ views in a challenging time such as a pandemic.

Since this dissertation aims to understand the message/creative strategies used by PSAs, this part of the chapter will explore the research in this area. Beginning with multiple typologies of creative/message strategies, to appeals, and other visual elements in an advertisement.

Advertising Strategy is a term that is oft used in academia and is interpreted differently by different scholars. Advertising strategy is often defined as encompassing all decisions related to the advertising planning process (Schultz & Barnes, 1999; Shimp, 2000). The various elements of the planning process include vital facts, primary marketing problem, communications objective, creative message strategy, and corporate requirements (Shimp, 2000, p.305; Frazer et al., 2002).
However, from a different view, scholars have used the terms creative and message strategies interchangeably. Here, the focus is on message itself and the development of creative execution of that idea. Advertising or Creative Strategy is about “What to say,” and Creative Tactics are about executing that message (Felton, 1994; Hwang, McMillan, and Lee, 2003). In this section, we will highlight the various ways in which the term creative strategy has evolved over years of research.

Simon (1971) classified creative strategies to help choose the most effective ads for a different market and product categories. The classification did not restrict to creative strategies; instead, also included the execution and sales promotions criteria. Simon (1971) labeled his strategies as “message structure.”

Aaker and Norris’s (1982), seminal paper proposed a simple but dichotomized-message types: emotional vs. rational messaging. These are also called: image/feeling vs. informational/cognitive. Later Vaughn (1980) formed a two-by-two matrix representing thinking versus feeling and high vs. low involvement products. He considered the thinking vs. feeling to be a situational variable and suggested a match between strategy and the situation in his two-by-two matrix.

Creative strategy is about what is said in an advertisement rather than how it is said. Frazer (1983) defined “creative strategy as a policy or a guiding principle that specifies the general nature and character of messages to be designed.” Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) define creative strategy as encompassing the main message and the method of presentation of the ad.
In various attempts to create typologies that would help understand these advertising elements, there have been many categories developed in these many years of advertising research. The following part of the section will elaborate on the various initial typologies and categories designed and developed to define creative strategies in advertising.


To help classify and incorporate a clear typology for creative strategies, Frazer (1983) elaborated the managerially oriented concept of creative strategy selection. Studying the literature, trade press, conversations with advertising professionals and analysis of advertisements, Frazer (1983) developed the first classification of creative strategies in advertising. They were: Generic strategy, Preemptive strategy, Unique Selling Proposition, Brand Image Strategy, Positioning, Resonance, and Anomalous/Affective Strategy.

Under a generic strategy, an advertisement claims the product and benefits associated with it without asserting any dominance in that industry or category. This strategy would work best for those products that are already leaders in their market. The Preemptive Strategy focused on adding the claim of being superior to other products in the market. The Unique Selling Proposition (USP) focused on creating claims on a unique
feature or benefit for that product. The brand image strategy was a claim based on some symbolic association to the product that will help brands compete against similar products in the market. In the positioning strategy, the advertiser positions their brand or product as a special one compared to the other competitors. This strategy is a method that most aggressive advertisements use to attack the market leader. Resonance strategy attempts to not focus on the brand image or product benefits and features, instead of on the emotions and experiences associated with the consumers. In an effective strategy, the advertiser attempts to provoke the consumer’s interest and attention through the ambiguity of humor. It says nothing much about the product and still intends to connect with the consumer emotionally.

While this model was successful and widely accepted, Laskey found that this did not suffice good inter-coder reliability and hence, developed a new typology to classify the categories to identify strategies for television commercials. Hence, Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) developed a two-step categorization to identify creative strategies. A typology that is mutually exclusive and exhaustive should be able to capture the meaningful differences between creative executions. In this two-step code, the researchers first coded the ads into the informational/ transformational category. Informational, also known as Rational, and Transformational, as Emotional. Then it was later coded into one of the nine categories as follows. The informational side had five message strategies for each commercial type. They are: Under informational: Comparative ads, USP, Preemptive, Hyperbole, and
Generic-informational. In Transformational, there are four types: User-image, Brand Image, Use Occasion, and Generic-transformational.

The positioning strategy, as mentioned by Frazer (1983), was renamed to be comparative. It was because it became difficult to decipher the ads when analyzing television commercials. Unique Selling Proposition as defined by Frazer meant sharing a unique feature of the brand/product in the ad. However, Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) defined USP as that which focuses on claims that can be verified or proven objectively. As Laskey defined it, the preemptive strategy is that which has no claim of uniqueness or mention of competing brands. Hyperbole ads give a general appearance of being factually correct but exaggerated and extravagant claims or assertions. In the last category, called Generic-informational, the focus is not on the brand instead, the message must be informational.

User-image is like resonance defined by Frazer (1983) and focuses on the users’ lifestyles and brands. The brand image focuses on the brand’s personality, for instance, by attributing quality, status, and prestige to a brand. In Use Occasion, the focus is primarily on the experience of using that brand. The last generic-transformational focuses on the product, and the ad is not just sharing information but is transformational.

Later, Taylor (1999) created a comprehensive model that included all these typologies, filled the gaps, and created Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel to understand the message strategies. As a result, it has found wide application in various interdisciplinary fields and areas of research. For instance, like in a study that explored the message
strategies of viral ads (Golan and Zaidner, 2008), Web-based campaigns (Kim, McMillan, and Hwang, 2005). This dissertation focuses on understanding the creative/message strategies using Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel. Taylor (1999) defined “Message strategy as what to say” and “Creative Strategy as to how to say and what to say”.

Thus, we see these multiple categories of typologies published by Simon (1971) ’s model suggests that there can be ten different specific message strategies under two general strategies. Frazer (1983) suggested seven specific strategies. Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) developed nine typologies of specific strategies and two central dichotomies as suggested by Pluto and Wells (1984).

2.6 Research on creative strategies in advertising

Other than research focusing on elaborating these typologies for creative strategies, research has used these different frameworks to understand the creative strategies of ads. There are a lot of creative strategy studies conducted using Taylor’s wheel, which is discussed in detail in the method section (Chapter 3) of this dissertation.

Since these typologies are indigenous to the United States, there is a question to understand if other countries use such strategies and to see how they use these creative strategies. In an earlier study by Ramaprasad and Hsegawa (1992), the researchers compared over 300 American and 300 plus Japanese advertisements to understand the differences in advertisers’ overall and specific strategies in these two countries. Researchers studied television commercials from these two countries and used the Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) model of typologies to code and analyze the ads. They found some
similarities in terms of the creative strategies employed by the advertisers in these two countries. Both the countries used a higher number of transformational advertisements, and they used a brand image from the transformational side of the category. Preemptive was most often used from the informational side of the category.

Later Taylor, Hoy, and Haley (1996) conducted a qualitative exploration to understand the French advertisers and their creative strategy. In this study, the researchers used in-depth interviews with creative directors, photographic documentation, analysis of agency documentation, and observation of ads on newspapers, magazines, television, radio, cinema, and outdoor. They found that French professionals did not have typologies or used the existing American typologies of creative strategy. These could be attributed to the fact that the French were reluctant to analyze their ads or did not have literature to study and discuss these typologies.

In another study that used the Simon classification scheme of generalized creative strategies, the researchers determined the differences in the creative strategies employed in highly creative domestic and international television commercials (Reid et al., 1985).

While understanding creative strategies are crucial, it is also essential to understand the effectiveness of these advertisements. A commercial’s effectiveness is likely influenced by the message strategy and how well that message is executed. In a study investigating the relative effectiveness of various message strategies and whether the strategies were particularly effective for particular product categories, the researchers found that the transformational strategies were more persuasive than informational. The three
components that they focused on here were key message comprehension, recall, and persuasion.

In terms of key message comprehension, informational was better than transformational. Depending on the product category, the specific strategies used were different. This study indicated that though there is a relationship between message strategy and television commercials’ effectiveness, it is a complex relationship as the other factors of product type and category also come into effect (Laskey, Crask, and Fox, 1995).

2.7 Appeals in advertisement

Advertising appeals are usually classified as rational and emotional appeals. An advertising appeal helps in attracting or capturing a consumer’s attention/interest in the advertising message. Therefore, it would have an impact on how they influenced the product or service. The concept of informational/rational/cognitive vs. transformational/emotional/feeling overlaps with the concept of hard-sell/ soft sell or emotional/ rational appeals.

Advertising appeals impact consumers’ responses to ads (Ruiz and Sicilia, 2004; Lepkowska-White et al., 2003). The most frequently used ad appeals are emotional (symbolic) and rational (utilitarian) (Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Snyder and DeBono, 1985). In a symbolic or emotional appeal, the focus is on creating an image of the brand/product for the consumer versus, in utilitarian or rational appeal, the focus is to present the facts about the brand or product.
The advertising appeals in health messages have focused on understanding the consumer behavior and response to these appeals. A study in Australia investigated the effectiveness of advertising appeals to promote smoking cessation. The study found that shame appeal in television ads resonated with the smokers and encouraged quitting (Amonini et al., 2015). In a meta-analysis of fear appeals, the researchers found that strong fear appeals produced high levels of susceptibility and were more persuasive. This was not true in case of low fear appeals (Witte and Allen, 2000).

2.7.1 Soft-Sell and Hard-Sell Appeals

A soft-sell appeal focuses on inducing subtle, implicit, and mood-oriented feelings in the individuals, versus the hard-sell appeals, focusing on producing a favorable cognitive judgment and offering facts to help that decision-making. So, in a soft-sell appeal, there is the use of soft, emotionally appealing images or text (Mueller, 1987). In addition, soft sell-appeals also include the symbolic and functional appeals of the product (Okazaki et al., 2010). Here the researchers observe three dimensions to soft-sell appeals- feeling, implicitness, and image. In comparison, hard-sell appeals have thinking, explicitness, and fact. Some studies also measure audience responses to these appeals (Chu, Gerstner, and Hess, 1995; Nikoomaram and Sarabadani, 2011).

2.7.2 Other Persuasive Elements in advertising

There is a need to use multiple elements to dictate an advertisement message for a pervasive medium like advertising. Music is one such element that is often included in a television or radio advertisement. Most of the television commercials include music, and
these vary culturally too. For example, in an analysis of Prime-Time commercials aired in the US, it was found that there were 14% of the ads contained popular music, 81% used generic, prefabricated music, and 5% were jingles (Allan, 2008).

2.7.3 Visual Imagery and Text in Advertising

Visual imagery in advertising includes the text, images, voice, sound, music in television commercials. In terms of print ads, these include pictures and text that can also offer complex and abstract stories through those visuals. There are many ways in which one can study visual imagery in advertisements. In the reader-response approach, there is an emphasis on the meanings drawn from these visual elements of the ads (Mick and Buhl, 1992). In the text-interpretive form drawn from semiotics, there is a systematic analysis of every element in the ad.

In an experimental study set by McQuarrie and Mick (1996), they found that visual imagery in advertising is not just peripheral cues, but instead, they can be an essential, intricate, meaningful part of marketing communication. Furthermore, their three-part experimental study showed that consumers were sensitive to the visual elements present in the ad. It is because visuals act as indirect persuasion, which relies on consumer inferences and meaning making.

2.8 Corona Virus Response Messaging

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world in ways that require a sudden shift in human behaviors. There has been a rapid shift in how information is received, consumed, and executed from altering how people shop, socialize and work. With the rapid spread of
misinformation campaigns, it is more important to be vigilant and aware of how messages are targeted and delivered to the public. These messages also change with time and the rate of spread of different variants of the SARS COV-2. Hence, there is a constant need to adapt according to the spread and transmission rates (Krittanawong et al., 2020).

In an online survey conducted during the early pandemic, the researchers tried to understand the risk perceptions of the COVID-19 outbreak. The results indicated that about 69% of respondents wanted the scientific and public health leadership to lead the COVID-19 response in the USA (McFadden et al., 2020). However, there is also a political angle to the coronavirus response in the United States. In an experimental study conducted in 2020, during the early outbreak of the pandemic, the researchers used Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to recruit around 1000 participants and understand the effects of public health messages in the United States. The messages varied from informational with no targeted info about threats to different age groups and then messages about specific threats to older and younger Americans. The findings indicated that government messaging could have a role to play in shaping or encouraging behaviors that would arrest the spread of Coronavirus. The research showed that threat messages targeting older adults did not have an attitudinal change (Utych and Fowler, 2020). Research also showed how messages communicating the COVID-19 pandemic should focus more on addressing community needs and risks than individual risks to address the cultural meanings associated with it (Arihihenbuwa et al., 2020). While the risks associated with chronic diseases like diabetes and asthma could be addressed to individuals, a pandemic like COVID-19 must be
addressed as a community risk. Though social distancing and masking were individual responsibilities, studies showed that these policies were difficult to follow for vulnerable populations (Yancy, 2020). Thus COVID-19 Messaging should had to consider the aspect of race and socioeconomic status as studies indicated the disparities in the population of color and low-income groups (Raifman and Raifman, 2020) played an important role in how such messages were perceived.

Health communication is thus crucial at this juncture. Even though the focus in this thesis is on coronavirus messaging, there is a relationship with non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension, and stroke that are disproportionate among people of color and ethnicity (Williams et al., 2019). Thus, messaging should focus on not just COVID-19 but also the overlap of both these issues. Though COVID-19 is a pandemic of catastrophic significance leading to isolation, loss, grief, and social disruption, these factors pave the way to increasing alcohol consumption (Kim et al., 2020). Thus, this shows how important it is to focus on health communication during this hour.

Even though prevention through behavioral changes can mitigate the spread of COVID, it is not a long-term solution. The long-term control of this pandemic can only come through the vaccination program. However, due to the dichotomous views on vaccine acceptance (political and societal), preventive vaccines have a slow uptake. A 2011 study that analyzed anti-vaccine websites found that these websites are changing with the trends in public health. The study also concluded that effective vaccine support claims could be supported by including emotionally compelling content (Bean, 2011). To overcome
COVID-19 would mean that majority of the population gets vaccinated. The latest research conducted by Motta et al. (2021) found that those messages emphasizing personal health risks and collective health consequences can help increase the intent to vaccinate among Americans. This study also claims that having a peer group communicating the message might better accept the expert opinion. Research in the past has indicated that personal risk factors can motivate Americans to vaccinate.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the methodology and theoretical approach to understand the Ad Council’s creative strategies in public service advertisements for health communication. As the purpose is to understand the message strategies, this study used the Six-Segment Advertising Strategy Wheel (Taylor, 1999) to understand the advertisers’ intended message. In addition to that, this dissertation also used the Thematic Analysis method (inductive) to unearth the themes across the different PSAs. The methodology employs a qualitative lens to study the creative strategies and overall themes employed by the PSAs in the health and wellness category of the Ad Council.

3.1 Data Selection and Collection

The data for this dissertation study comes from those ads under the health and wellness section of Ad Council’s website. The advertisements used for this dissertation were only in English (although the Ad Council has ads in both English and Spanish). This dissertation includes only television commercials, although, radio ads, print, banner, and online ads were listed on the website as assets. The advertisements were downloaded and transcribed. Then the ads were analyzed using two methods. First, using the framework of Taylor’s Six-segment strategy wheel and then using thematic analysis. These use of two approaches is complementary. While, the Taylor’s strategy wheel helps understand the advertiser’s intent and creative strategies, and the Thematic Analysis (TA) will help in understanding the specific messages of each ad and thereby understand the overall themes in the health and wellness PSAs.
The advertisements were from the following categories:

- Alzheimer’s Awareness
- Autism Awareness
- Corona Virus Response
- COVID-19 Vaccine Education
- High Blood Pressure
- Lung Cancer Screening
- Middle School Mental Health
- Suicide Prevention
- Type 2 Diabetes Prevention
- Youth Vaping Prevention
- Flu Vaccination

This dissertation categorized the coronavirus response and COVID-19 vaccination ads against the other health campaigns. This separation/categorization helps in understanding the differences in the message strategies between the COVID-19 ads and other general health messages and identifying the common themes across all PSAs.

3.2 Paradigmatic Perspective

This dissertation uses a qualitative paradigmatic view to understand the creative strategies of health PSAs on the Ad Council website. Advertising research has often used this research paradigm to address multiple phenomena and answer research questions.
This dissertation uses a qualitative paradigmatic view to understand the creative strategies of health PSAs on the Ad Council website. Advertising research has often used this research paradigm to address multiple phenomena and answer research questions.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to test a hypothesis, instead it is to describe, analyze, and interpret the strategies and overall themes in public health communication.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) posit, "The term qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality and the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and in situational constraints that shape inquiry... Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of the inquiry. They seek answers to question and stress how social experience is created and given meaning."

Qualitative research methods include a variety of techniques like personal in-depth/open-ended interviews, focus groups, projective techniques, participant observation, ethnography, case studies, photography analysis, storytelling, and data analysis using an interpretive, hermeneutic, or inductive approach. Qualitative research can be helpful to understand the perspectives and meaning-making of consumers, individuals, or society towards a particular phenomenon. It is also a tremendous exploratory tool to investigate the various themes and ideas that emerge from content.
In an inductive analysis, a qualitative researcher first finds objects and then identifies and classifies them based on their characteristics. Then as they move to each following characteristic/object, they try to see if it fits within an established category or theme or requires a new one. Qualitative research then lets the data speak and unfold without any personal biases and opinions (Morrison et al., 2002).

For example, researchers have examined how consumers react to how advertisers influence editorial content (Cunningham and Haley, 2000). In addition, some of the qualitative advertising research has been to explore the issues in advertising like definitions of effective account planning (Haley, Taylor, and Morrison, 2014), understanding French advertising creative strategies (Taylor, Hoy, and Haley, 1996), and exploring the expectations of advertising creatives for entry-level positions (Blakeman and Haley, 2005). In a recent study to understand how brand managers make sense of the digital media environment Milfeld and Haley (2021) used the qualitative lens to address the same. Qualitative advertising research has used content analysis to study Italian alcohol advertisements (Beccaria, 2001). In another study that adopted a niche theory and brand differentiation framework, researchers conducted a qualitative content analysis of ads representing cable networks. They found that the ever-increasing competition was fighting over zero-sum resources of audiences and advertising dollars (McDowell, 2004).

Since this dissertation aims to explore the creative strategies employed by the health and wellness messages by the Ad Council and understand the various themes that are used
across the different health messages in comparison to how the latest pandemic was addressed, a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate method.

3.3 Theoretical Framework: Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel

Taylor’s Strategy Wheel (Taylor, 1999) is a theoretical model that helps understand the many strategic persuasion messages. In addition, the model helps us understand the persuasive purposes of creative strategy in health PSAs. The following sections will elaborate on Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel and its many applications in research.

3.4 Introduction to Taylor’s Six Segment Strategy Wheel

One of the first academicians to develop approaches to understand different buying situations was Kotler (1965). Vaughn (1980) developed the first approach to determine creative strategies for brands and advertisers based on his framework for buying conditions. This model was called the FCB-Foote, Cone, and Belding Model. FCB Grid forms an integrative method to interpret consumer buying behavior and thereby developing advertising strategies. While Kotler’s buying behavior model (1965) helped understand or classify consumer buying behavior categories, the FCB Grid categorized consumers’ buying or decision-making patterns. However, this model had its weakness and an inability to account for the various influences of social factors that are a part of the buying process (Ratchford, 1987; Taylor, 1999).

Taylor (1999) decided to draw upon the theoretical works of James Carey and John Dewey, Kotler’s buying behavior model, Vaughn’s FCB grid, Frazer’s creative strategy summary, and Laskey, Day, and Crask’s typology of message strategies for television
commercials. Considering all these models suggested to understand the process for creating messages for advertisers, Taylor made a comprehensive typology of message strategies called Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel.

**3.4.1 Carey’s Communication Model**

Carey (1975) suggested two different ways of mass communication, namely transmission and ritual models. In the transmission view, communication is the most common method of transmitting information. The terms associated with this model are imparting, sending, transmitting, or giving information. Thus, we can associate a metaphor of a transport system where the goal is to deliver the message. The other view is called ritual, where the message is not just transmitted; instead, there is a meaningful transformation due to that communication. The terms associated with this model are sharing, participation, fellowship, and possession of a common faith. Thus, this model believes in bringing people together and their shared meaning to the message.

**3.4.2 Kotler's Buying Behavior Model**

Kotler developed five behavioral models for marketing strategies to understand the different buying processes of consumers (Kotler, 1965). One of them is about the purchase decisions of organizations, and Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel does not incorporate that. The four different behavioral models are:

- The Marshallian Economic model.
- Pavlovian Learning Model.
- Freudian Psychoanalytic model.
Veblenian Social-Psychological Model.

In the Marshallian model, the buyer makes the buying decisions only based on rational and economic motivation. Thus, when the information provided offers detailed benefits and price points for the product, the consumer can conclude the purchase rationally. In the Pavlovian model, Kotler posits that consumers make decisions based on the cues they get from the message. The Freudian model implies that there are symbolic and functional parameters that drive their purchasing decisions. Finally, the Veblenian Social-Psychological model posits that consumers make their buying decisions based on their intrinsic needs and social status. Various levels of society like culture, subculture, and the groups they are associated with within their lives influence consumers' decisions.

3.4.3 FCB Grid

This model is an extension of the hierarchy model. It posits that based on the consumer’s thinking; this model will help suggest the purchase decisions. The matrix uses the decision-making involvement of the consumer: high vs. low involvement to thinking vs. feeling of the consumer (Vaughn, 1980). This model is presented as an extension of Kotler’s buying behavior model and combines with the decision-making involvement of the consumer to form the FCB Grid. This showcases informative, habit-forming, emotional, and self-satisfaction as the four grids. (Taylor, 1999).

3.5 Typologies of Creative Strategy

An initial set of creative strategies proposed by Simon (1971) had ten creative strategies: information, argument, motivation with psychological appeals, repeated
assertion, command, brand familiarization, symbolic association, imitation, obligation, and habit starting. Later, Frazer (1983) developed the typologies of creative strategies by arranging them in historical development in consumer goods. These were named generic strategy, preemptive, unique selling proposition, brand image, positioning, resonance. Of these, the first three would fall under the transmission model of communication, and the next three would be under the ritual view of communication. However, this set of typologies did not help classify the television commercials, leading Laskey, Day, and Crask (1989) to divide the two strategies as informational and transformational. The informational ones were: comparative, USP, preemptive, hyperbole, and generic-informational. The transformational ones are user image, brand image, use occasion, and generic-transformational. These were elaborated in the literature review chapter.

3.6 Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel development

Though the typologies mentioned above of creative strategies helped create and identify the strategies based on an understanding of consumer buying behavior, these models were not comprehensive. The FCB grid was used to understand the creative strategies; however, it has not been able to account for the social factors that influence and shape the buying process (Taylor, 1999; Ratchford, 1987). The FCB grid also did not incorporate the Veblenian model of Kotler’s buying behavior model, and research shows how the model was not successful enough to capture the “feeling” dimension (Taylor, 1999). Therefore, Taylor (1999) proposed Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel that
incorporated these various models and created a comprehensive typology of message/creative strategies to fill this gap. (See Figure 1).

To design this, he first used the transmission and ritual view, also called informational and transformational view, respectively (Wells, 1980; Laskey et al., 1989). Then, he divided them into segments. On the ritual or transformational side, Taylor (1999) created three segments. The first segment comprises the Freudian Psychoanalytic Model, where consumers’ emotional needs are met by products that appease their ego. Thus, things that please their self and ego will drive the purchase decisions. The second segment incorporated Veblenian Social-Psychological Model, where a need to build and maintain a social image drives a consumers’ purchase decisions. Therefore, if the advertising messages catered to their sense of social being and admiration, it would appeal to these decision-makers. Finally, in the last segment on the right side of the wheel, Taylor used the Cyrenaic philosophy, where pleasure and appeasement of senses played a role in decision making. Here, the message transforms the product or service into a pleasurable moment.

Moving on to the left side of the wheel or the informational side, Taylor (1999) again divided this into three segments. The fourth segment used the Pavlovian Model, where habits and cues decide the purchasing behavior. In the fifth segment, acute time crunch and urgency inspired decision making. Finally, the last component incorporated Marshallian Economic Model, which meant rational and economic choices influence the decisions.
Figure 1: Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel.
These segments were named: Ego, Social, and Sensory on the ritual or transformational side of the wheel. Then, continuing to the fourth segment of the wheel, it moved to the transmission or informational side of the wheel. These segments were named: Routine, Acute, and Rational. Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy wheel functions as a framework to devise a single or combined creative/message strategy approach (Figure 1). For instance, a creative strategy could use just one segment like sensory or a combination of sensory-social.

To better understand these different segments in a creative/message strategy, let us take an example of over-the-counter medicine for allergies. Let the brand be "Z."

3.6.1 Transmission or Informational side of the wheel

*Ration*: Here, the decision-maker will be interested in information that can motivate their purchase. Thus, this would have a "reason why" copy (Taylor, 1999). The message will be driven by logic which supports the consumer's rational choices. For brand Z of allergy medicine, a message strategy would focus on the price or benefits of that brand. "Z is a cost-effective and doctor-recommended brand of allergy medicine to help you this allergy season."

*Acute*: Here, the decision-maker will be interested in information to help their immediate needs and make quicker decisions. It means the consumer decides within a limited amount of time. Thus, the messaging should cater to this attribute. For brand Z of allergy medicine, the focus would be the urgency of season change and allergies. "Allergies are here, and you need to take Z now to feel better."
**Ritual:** Here, the decision-maker will be interested in information to help with routine needs for a product. They make decisions based on their regular habits or routine. Thus, such a creative strategy's messaging focuses on creating new patterns and habits or retaining existing practices. For brand Z of allergy medicine, the message would say, "Taking it just one time a day would keep you away from all allergies this season."

3.6.2 **Ritual or Transformational Side of the Wheel**

**Ego:** Here, the decision-maker perceives self, and the things that appeal to please themselves dictate their purchasing decisions. Thus, this would mean that the creative strategy employed will explain how the product or service can help a consumer's ego. For example, a message strategy for brand Z of allergy medicine would focus on the consumer's wisdom to choose the brand or showcase their pride. "The wise ones always make the best choice. They choose brand Z".

**Social:** Here, the focus is not on an individual consumer but their position in a social setting. This segment focuses on the need for a consumer to build their social class and status through their purchases. For example, a message strategy for brand Z of allergy medicine would show a social setting like a party. "You can be the star of a party like you deserve to be. Stay allergy-free by choosing Z".

**Sensory:** In this segment, the consumers' decision-making choices are motivated by the sensory appeals of the product. Thus, the creative strategy focuses on showcasing how the product can appeal to various senses. For brand Z, "You can smell the flowers this spring. Allergy-free with Z"
3.6.3 Application of Taylor’s Strategy Wheel in Research

Since this six-segment strategy wheel got published in 1999, it has found applications in different segments and across industries like interdisciplinary fields of communication, advertising, and consumer behavior. The studies have applied the strategy wheel to capture a complete view of consumer buying behavior and decision-making across different mediums. For example, Taylor’s Six-Segment strategy wheel has been used as a theoretical lens to study ads to study websites, viral ads, social media, television, and print advertisements. Thus, Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel is a great model for analyzing creative advertising strategies as it provides an in-depth understanding of how the advertisers frame the messages.

3.6.4 Study of Advertisements

Some of the applications using this strategy wheel have been studying advertisements: television, print, viral/online, and even social media. The categories of these ads also varied. For example, while Morrison and White (2000) studied Superbowl commercials, Golan and Zainder (2008) focused on viral ads. Lee, Taylor, and Chung (2011) examined financial ads, Tsai and Lancaster (2012) studied Direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical ads, while Wolburg and Venger (2009) studied alcohol advertisements.

In one of the earliest studies, Morrison and White (2000) used this model to analyze Super Bowl commercials of dot-com companies. The results showed that most of these companies used ration and ego strategies.
In a study conducted to understand the creative strategies used in viral advertisements, Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel applied as the theoretical framework to viral ads (a total of 360), Golan and Zainder (2008) were able to identify the themes of humor and sexuality as the main themes for such ads. This study coded to identify the themes and found that the viral ads were mainly on the ritual side of communication.

Lee, Taylor, and Chung (2011) applied the strategy wheel to understand the changes in advertising strategies during an economic crisis between 2005-2009. This study analyzed print ads for banking, credit card, insurance, investment, and financial firms to find that advertisers shifted away from transformational messaging to informational messaging during this period. Thus, it indicated how society’s complex and speculative periods shift consumers’ decision-making, making it more rational.

Tsai & Lancaster (2012) used Taylor’s Strategy Wheel to understand the message strategies in direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical ads. The most widely used strategy was the ego strategy from the ritual side of the wheel. The ads focused on how the medicine could impact the self-image of the person. Only a few used sensory appeals for the message strategy.

In a study that compared Ukrainian and American alcohol advertising messages, the researchers used Taylor’s Strategy Wheel as a framework to decipher the advertiser’s intended message (Wolburg and Venger, 2009). The researchers analyzed 50 diverse magazine advertisements from 2006 (24 from Ukrainian and 26 from American publications). From these, the researchers analyzed selected alcohol ads using both text
analysis and Taylor’s strategy wheel to understand the advertiser’s intended message. The results from this study show that message strategies told different cultural stories that reflected the ideologies of each country. The strategy wheel was helpful to understand how alcohol ads communicated surface characteristics and the advertiser’s intended message using various message strategies. The most common appeals used for these ads were sensory, social, and ego. The Ukrainian ads had both sensory and social strategy, while the American ads used more ego strategies. There were also Ukrainian alcohol ads that used rational strategy. Taylor (1999) posits that culture has the upper hand in driving an advertising strategy, not the product itself. However, the differences in how each of these countries approached alcohol advertising proved the same.

A study that used Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy wheel to analyze the message strategies employed by DTC ads showed a simultaneous use of informational and transformational messages. Within that, user-image appeals, and Unique-Selling-Proposition (USP) were most frequently used (Ju and Park, 2015).

3.6.5 Study of Websites and Social MediaMessaging

Later in a study conducted by Hwang, McMillan, & Lee (2003), the researchers studied the corporate websites as a company advertisement. Using the Strategy Wheel, they found that from among the 160 websites reviewed, most of the message strategies were more informational than transformational. Those that used transformational form of message strategies had a higher income.
In another study of cosmetic surgery website communication and message strategies, the results indicated that those websites that followed the transmission side of the wheel primarily used rational message strategies. Conversely, those websites that used ritual modes of communication used all the three segments of the strategy wheel, with a higher number of sensory and ego message strategies (Ahn, Wu, and Taylor, 2013).

Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel is an excellent theoretical framework for communicating health and wellness messages to the public and promoting healthy behavior. In addition, this strategy wheel offers a wide variety of approaches to advertisers to communicate these messages. Thus, the framework can also decipher the messages and understand the creative strategy (Wolburg, 2012).

3.7 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method employed to analyze qualitative data to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There are some debates on the different qualitative approaches of TA as arguments are stating TA is not an analytic approach, and it is a meta-analytic technique (Gibson and Brown, 2009). In addition, some discussions show how TA can bridge qualitative and quantitative studies (Boyatzis, 1998). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) comment that Thematic Analysis is a method that can interpret the themes in qualitative data and is developed primarily to use within the qualitative paradigm.

The primary purpose of thematic analysis (Figure 2) is to identify the themes or patterns in the data that are important and address the research questions. This method
provides an organic means to develop codes and themes from the data. Codes are the smallest units of analysis. This helps capture the potentially relevant points for the research and works as building blocks for the themes. Themes provide the framework for organizing and reporting the researcher’s analytic observation. TA is a flexible method that can help produce a rigorous and high-quality analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013). It means the researcher has a robust process for identifying the themes and patterns and interpreting them differently by making choices on engaging with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

There are six steps to conduct a Thematic Analysis.

- Familiarization of the data
- Generating the preliminary codes to the data that will help describe the content
- Search for patterns or themes across data
- Review themes
- Define and name themes
- Producing Reports

Familiarization of the data is about writing down the initial ideas and looking at the data thoroughly. The second step involves coding for exciting features in the data in a systematic fashion and coding for relevant codes. In the third step, collecting codes for themes, and during the review, checking if the themes work concerning the codes and the entire set data. Defining and naming themes is an analysis to refine the specifics of each overall theme story the research can tell.
Figure 2: Steps of Thematic Analysis.
The final step involves selecting compelling themes and analyzing them to the questions and literature review (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Although widely used, the thematic analysis method is also often not understood rightly by researchers for the confusion in the method’s philosophical underpinnings (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). However, it is considered a suitable method to understand a set of experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2012). It is similar to the other qualitative methods like grounded theory and ethnography (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). However, unlike grounded theory, where the researcher engages with the data to interpret and develop a theory, this helps describe and categorize data.

The drawback of Thematic Analysis is that since there is flexibility to the researcher to develop, edit, and create themes, this perception is not a rigorous method (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

Research using thematic analysis has primarily been in psychology and other related fields. In advertising, thematic analysis has been used to understand the themes in indoor UV tanning advertisements (Prior and Rafuse, 2015). One study that looked at gender portrayals in television ads used the thematic analysis proposed by Boyatzis (1998).

Qualitative methods offer rich insights to understand the data, design, and address the research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). For example, Thematic Analysis (TA) offers the tools to identify, analyze, and report themes or patterns within data. Then, using vivid examples to relate to one’s data analysis, the researcher can inductively unveil the
themes that are not so apparent within the data and can only be understood with review and reflection of the data (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000). This has been widely used to understand and explore qualitative data in health research and thus will be an appropriate tool to understand the data from the PSAs.

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis within the framework of Taylor’s Six-Segment Strategy Wheel

Taylor’s Strategy Wheel helps in the categorization of the creative strategies. Thus, during the first part of the analysis, this framework will provide the strategy types for each advertisement. As a second part of the analysis to provide an in-depth understanding of the messages, the thematic analysis will uncover the specific ideas communicated in these health messages. Next, the transcribed data will be analyzed by studying the ads’ words, phrases, and visuals. Finally, themes will be inductively examined following the five-step thematic analysis process using the qualitative paradigmatic lens. These will be for the specific health messages and to find common or different themes, if any, across all health PSAs.

3.8 Trustworthiness Check

The advantage of a qualitative analysis of data is the richness of collected data and how it is interpreted and collected validly and reliably (Elo et al., 2014). The trustworthiness is identified by data collection, sampling strategy, and selecting a suitable unit of analysis. This dissertation has collected the Ad Council’s website data and those listed in the health and wellness category. The sampling also included all the ads available
in the category and used the most extended version of the ad in case of options available.

The data was also cross-checked and verified by two other scholars from the committee to provide a trustworthiness check to the current dissertation study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The advertisements were selected and downloaded from the website of the Ad Council. All ads listed under the health and wellness tabs were selected. The health and wellness tab addressed the following diseases:

1. Alzheimer’s Awareness
2. Autism Awareness
3. High Blood Pressure Control
4. Type-2 Diabetes Prevention
5. Lung Cancer Screening
6. Youth Vaping Prevention
7. Suicide Prevention
8. Middle School Mental Health
9. Flu Vaccination
10. Coronavirus Response
11. COVID-19 Vaccine Education

The ads downloaded were the television commercials listed under each of these disease types. The commercials were of various ad lengths (6, 15, 30, or 60 seconds). If a drop-down box was available, only the most extended available ad was considered for analysis. For instance, in the Alzheimer’s awareness campaign, some ads had a drop-down listing 6, 15, and 30-second ads. However, the research considered only the 30 seconds as it covered the same message and helped clarify the creative strategy. The ads were bilingual
for most of these disease campaigns, however, only the English ads were downloaded and transcribed for this study. Although most ads were equivalent (in the two languages), some ads did use a different Spanish version; however, only English ones were considered for this research.

First, each ad was downloaded and then transcribed to include the messages (both the narrator’s voice, the dialogues by the models, and the text that appeared on the screen). In addition, the transcription included other elements in the advertisement like the screen color, the characters displayed, the font types or specific animations, music, and gender of the characters, and voice-over. These inputs will provide the richness of the data for the analysis.

The analysis to understand the creative strategies employed the theoretical framework of Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel, and that used the voice-over and model’s content and text that appeared on the screen. Similarly, the keywords were coded first from these texts, and sub-themes and themes were developed for each ad by following the process of Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Using Taylor’s six-segment strategy wheel, the ad was analyzed for its positive or negative appeal. For instance, in the lung cancer prevention ads, though the focus was to offer sensible advice to get scanned, one of the ads used the image and music to induce fear. Hence, it was analyzed to be acute with a ration wheel.

The results and findings section here will elaborate each of these campaigns by disease type and give an overview of the ads, the length, and the other information
regarding the agencies used and the purpose of the campaign proposed by the Ad Council.
In addition, this will give an overview of how each of those campaigns was advertised.

To help answer the research question on thematic analysis, the researcher used the step-by-step process of Braun & Clarke (2006). The thematic map will be discussed at the end of the results section.

4.1 Alzheimer’s Awareness

This campaign set was sponsored jointly by the Alzheimer’s Association and the Ad Council, and the key theme across all the ads under this campaign was about noticing changes leading to an early diagnosis. With Alzheimer’s impacting over 5 million people in the United States, this campaign aims at encouraging families to start a conversation around noticing changes in near and dear ones and encouraging them to get tested. Hence, the primary tagline for this campaign, “It is time to talk.” Some of the ads were based on real-life stories, and the page had also provided a website separately for those who followed the Spanish language.

4.1.1 About the Ads

There were six English television ads, and all of them were of 30-second length time. Three of the ads were animated with the voice-over and text that appeared at the end of the ad, while the other three, called the “Hopeful” series was based on real-life stories and featured human models. The “Hopeful” series was more recently uploaded and created in 2021, whereas the animated versions were created in 2019. The agencies involved included the Community and Mindshare for the 2019 and 2021 campaigns, respectively.
The colors in the ads were mild, and the music was soft and gentle as well. In addition, the three animated ads used voice-overs that represented the animated characters. The animated and the “Hopeful” versions using real-life stories used the same tagline: It is time to talk. However, the same message in the Hopeful” series focused on the companionship, support, and joy of being with family.

4.1.2 Creative Strategies

All of the Alzheimer’s Awareness ads used a combination of both transformational and informational strategies. For example, while the animated series used Acute and Social strategies, the “Hopeful” series used Rational and Social Strategies. The choice of words in the animated ads included cue words that indicated concern, such as “alarming, wake up call, unsettling,” they eventually changed over to a more supportive tone indicating support for their mom or spouse.

In contrast, even though the “Hopeful” series ads used similar words, such as “cries, and hard to hear”, the approach still indicated empathy and support from the other characters (mainly family). This series also used the final tagline, “If you or your family are noticing changes …..”, instead of “when something feels different.”

4.2 Autism Awareness

The Autism Speaks and Ad Council jointly sponsored this ad campaign. The key theme for the ads under this campaign communicated the importance of early diagnosis as current research shows how autism is not detected or diagnosed until over four years of age, especially amongst people from vulnerable backgrounds and low-income groups. The
essential purpose of the campaign is to make sure an early detection and intervention by caregivers or parents can help provide a better development environment for and improve communication skills in such children.

4.2.1 About the Ads listed

There were five ads. Out of the five ads, four of them were based on Sesame Street characters. The ads varied in their length, and three of the Sesame Street sponsored ads were only 6-second in length, and only one was 60 seconds long. Only one ad used human models, and a slice of life narrative was for 30 seconds.

The campaigns were from the years 2020 and early 2021. The Sesame Street workshop sponsored ads followed the typical Sesame Street color tones of red and bright colors. The ad with human characters and models reflected similar brighter colors that said the story of a party. The music for both was mild, happy, and playful, and both types of ads used a female voice-over. The agency that worked on this campaign was BBDO New York.

4.2.2 Creative Strategies

The 60-second ads “The Big Day” and “Julia Revised” used a combination strategy showing both ‘acute’ and ‘social’ creative strategy. For the ‘The Big Day ’ad, the Acute strategy is evident from the term ‘sooner’ you can diagnose, ‘the sooner you can make a difference”. The 60-second ad of “Julia Revised” used the same Acute and Social strategy. This is evident from the text that says, “the sooner you can make a difference.” As for the sesame street ad with Julia, all the 6-second ads did not use any voice-over and only text that plainly said, “Julia has autism. She sings. She plays.” Thus, in this ad, a “social creative strategy” indicated that we need to observe these children as they do things
they like and are just like other children. It also had a sensory element in its colors and brightness, matching the sesame street colors, though that was not the creative strategy used in the ad. The ads carried the same logos of Autism Speaks and can make a lifetime of difference. Screenforautism.com is provided at the end of the ad.

4.3 Flu Vaccination

This campaign was sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Medical Association (AMA), and the Ad Council. The key theme of this campaign was to encourage getting a flu shot, and the primary tag line is, “no time to get sick with flu.”

4.3.1 About the ads listed

Only one 30-second commercial from 2020 was present in this category. The ad depicted a pandemic world with the characters wearing a mask. The ad used human models and showed a slice of life of different sets of people. One represented a family with a mom very busy dealing with work, answering, and helping her husband in the kitchen, and keeping the kids busy and active. Then it cuts to a busy chef in a restaurant kitchen preparing orders, then a paramedic busy treating someone outdoors, and then a grocery store cashier who is actively scanning the produce and grocery on the conveyor. The colors used in the ad were representative of the character’s location, while in the end, the band-aids and the screen where text appeared all used an aqua blue color shade. The actors stood tall and with confidence as they showed their band-aid after the shot. The music was
energetic and showed the agility of the characters. Voices represent the character. The agency that worked on this campaign was fluent360.

4.3.2 Creative Strategy

The ad used an “acute” creative strategy. The acute strategy was evident from the text “no time to get sick” or “we do not have time for delays and setbacks,” and how the characters were represented. The focus here was to indicate the urgency to get the flu shot and timely considering the flu season around the corner. The final screen shows getaflushot.com. The ad, however, was upbeat and vibrant. The goal was to convey, get the flu shot, and do not get sick.

4.4 High Blood Pressure

This campaign was sponsored by the American Heart Association (AHA), American Medical Association (AMA), and American Stroke Association (ASA). With over 50% of adults in the United States diagnosed with high blood pressure, some never under control, they are at higher risk for stroke, heart attack, and other serious health issues. The key message of this campaign was to encourage the public to monitor and be aware of their blood pressure.

4.4.1 About the Ads

There was only one ad available on the website, and it was a 30-second campaign titled “Release the pressure.” The ad does not use any human models, nor voice-over, but just colorful, vibrant text animates to drive the point about getting one’s blood pressure checked. The agency that worked on this campaign is Tongal. The images used were bright
with colors like purple, yellows, shades of pink, white, and animated text. It also used peppy music to share the key points of “eating well, sleeping, checking one’s BP, and checking with a squad.”

4.4.2 Creative Strategy

The ad used a Routine strategy. It addressed an individual paying attention to one’s BP just like every other thing they do every day- eating good food and sleeping. The focus of the message was to encourage the viewers to pay attention to one’s blood pressure bp regularly and check in with one’s squad and the doctor to have a blood pressure goal. Hence, routine strategy. It was about the routine maintenance of health. The strategy, therefore, was informational.

4.5 Lung Cancer Screening

The lung cancer campaign was sponsored by the American Lung Association and the Ad Council. Research indicates that this was one of the prominent and most fatal cancers in the United States that affected men and women. With over 10 million people at high risk for lung cancer, the campaign's primary purpose was to promote early detection and treatment. The campaign's focus was to tell people who have smoked in the past to "quit now to get scanned" as the symptoms may not appear for a long time.

4.5.1 About the Ads

There were three ads and all from different years - 2017, 2018, and 2019. All of them were 30 seconders, and the key message was early detection. In the 2017 and 2018 ads, the message focused on the critical statement of "if you smoked, early detection could
save you." The tag line was "saved by the scan." Though the 2019 ad also focused on early
detection, it did not mention smoking except visually showing the lungs as a 3d image
made of matchsticks.

While the 2017 ad of "meet the scan" showed a woman climbing mounds of smoked
cigarettes, the 2018 campaign portrayed the scan as a superhero who wears a cape. In
addition, it used animation and texts to say that the scan can detect early and therefore be
safe. The music also varied based on the years and campaign purpose. For instance, the
2019 ad of “Matches” used dramatic music, while the 2017 and 2018 ads used peppy and
upbeat music. Then it showed a scan to show how it can ease all these doubts and
apprehensions early. The ads were by Facebook creative and Hill Holliday.

4.5.2 Creative Strategy

The ads from 2017 and 2018 titled "Meet the scan" and "Saved by Scan" used Ration
creative strategy. However, the more recent ad from 2019 titled "Matches" used both acute
and ration strategies. The "Matches" ad used scary tactics during the first part and created
a sense of urgency to get the scan. Therefore, all the ads under this category belonged to
the informational strategy wheel – using either ration or a combination of ration with acute
strategy.

4.6 Middle School Mental Health

To address the rising mental health crisis amongst youngsters between the ages of
10 and 14, the Ad Council joined hands with Pivotal Ventures to create a “Sound It Out
campaign.” The main goal of this campaign was to help parents and caregivers to have
meaningful conversations with their middle-schoolers about emotional well-being. Though the website indicates the campaign collaborated with musical artists, the one listed in English only had KAMAUU. This collaboration was an effort to create an entire album of songs inspired by the emotions of these middle schoolers.

4.6.1 About the Ads

The ad was from 2021 and is more relevant because of the mental health issues during a pandemic. The ad featured KAMAUU and a black family with a father and son having food at the dining table. The settings had a darker tone to the way it was presented, and it was a 60-second ad. The ad was explicitly addressed to black audiences.

The ad was a story set between a dad and son at a formal dining table. When the dad tries to have a conversation, the boy walks away and sulks as he gets to his room upstairs. Then, KAMAUU, the artist, appears, and he was shown in some conversation with some other young boy (like a parallel setting in the same space, oblivious to this young boy listening to his music). Then begins the rap by KAMAUU, and the boy is shown to be enjoying and calming down to the music in his bedroom. Later, he walks down the stairs to the dining table to begin a conversation with his father.

4.6.2 Creative Strategy

This ad emphasized the point of having a conversation with one’s middle schoolers. The ad used a social strategy to address the same. Thus, the ad belonged to the transformational or emotional side of the wheel. The creative strategy appeared to be social
as it showed how parents and children needed interaction, better conversations that can help improve mental health.

**4.7 Suicide Prevention**

To address mental health among younger adults from 16-35 years of age, The JED Foundation and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, along with the Ad Council, have a campaign called “Seize the Awkward,” where young adults were empowered to talk to their friends who struggle with mental health issues and are at risk for suicide. The key theme is to talk and begin conversations, seize the awkward silence with conversations.

**4.7.1 About the Ads**

There were three ads available under this campaign, with the ‘Seize the Awkward’ series published in 2018, whereas “whatever gets you talking” in 2020. In the “Seize the Awkward” series, the awkward theme is often used throughout the ad to show how silence is awkward and how sometimes to break it with conversations about mental health.

In the recent ad of 2020, the focus is on how one can reach out to one’s friends in different ways. There were two 60 second ads and one 30 second ad. The “whatever gets you talking ad” used jingle and voice-over during the initial part of the ad. Brighter colors and disco themes were used throughout the ad, and the music was hip-hop and peppy. One of the ‘Seize the Awkward” series of 2018 used darker tones in the background, like dark couches, and colors on the wall, while the others used brighter colors in the ads. The agency that worked on these campaigns was Droga5.
4.7.2 Creative Strategy

From the analysis of the ad, the ad used a creative social strategy as it talks about discussing and reaching out to friends and loved ones. In the 'Seize the Awkward' ad of 2018, the creative strategy employed social and creative ego strategy as the onus is on the individual to break the awkward silence and start the conversation. The same strategy was used in "The Awkward Silence" ad as well. The ad used the lines, 'you should seize the awkward' and start the conversation. In both the ads, individuals were shown, and the music in the background was generic and mild, and happy.

In "whatever gets you talking," only social strategy was used. This ad showed more ways to reach out to a friend in need. However, it used rap, jingle, and fun music to communicate the same. All three ads used the transformational strategy.

4.8 Type 2 Diabetes

CDC, AMA, and the Ad Council sponsored the Type 2 Diabetes prevention campaign as more than one in three American adults have prediabetes, which puts them at high risk for diabetes.

4.8.1 About the Ads

The ads under this title were all towards preventing type 2 diabetes by addressing prediabetic conditions among adults. From the six ads that are under this category, one was specific to the North Carolina audience. One of the more recent ads from 2021 specifically targeted the male audience. In general, the other ads were for adults between 25-55 plus. The ads were created by Grey New York, Ad Council Content Studio, Tongal, and Ogilvy
New York. The two 30-second ads were specifically titled North Carolina Program and North Carolina – Take your Risk test out of the four ads. These were animated with graphs and data that shared the need to get prediabetes tests done.

The North Carolina-specific ads were descriptive enough with graphs and data, exclusively addressed to NC residents. For example, one could enroll in a prediabetes program and find a lifestyle coach to help create lifestyle changes and healthy eating to prevent Type 2 diabetes. The colors of this ad are bright with pale yellow and blue shades with graphs, charts, and information to discuss how prevention can reverse the onset of Type 2 diabetes.

The other four ads were all 60 seconds long. Two of them used animals: puppies and hedgehogs. However, the message in both was the same about getting the one-minute prediabetes risk test done. Both these ads used mild but pleasant colors and maintained the blue color theme throughout the ad. In addition, the ad had text that shared information about the one-minute prediabetes test. It did not have a voice-over but only text along with the cute visuals of the animals. Another 60-second ad that also discussed the need for a one-minute risk test had a model who appeared to be a doctor as he explained the test. These ads were all from the 2017 and 2018 periods.

The last ad of 60 seconds was titled “Change the Outcome,” which used human models, but none spoke or interacted. Instead, a voice-over and the visuals conveyed the need to get the one-minute risk test done. The latest 2021 ad used human models intended for male audiences and still maintained the color with the aquarium water - glass wall. In
addition, it had eerie music, and a freeze-time image of a broken glass wall as the voice-over fills the ad.

4.8.2 Creative Strategies

Out of these six ads, the NC-specific ads used only the ration strategy. However, the ads that used animals used a combination of ration and sensory (given the visual elements and calmness of the relaxing animals). Thus, it used a combination strategy. As for the ad with the doctor model, the information was similar to the puppies and hedgehog ad. However, the way he provided that information was condescending, creating a sense of ‘urgency’ in getting the risk test done. Thus, even though the ad did not use an acute strategy, the tone did give a different appeal compared to the same message in the puppies or hedgehogs ad. The ad titled “Change the outcome” from 2021 used an acute strategy, reminding one to reverse prediabetes. However, it did not elaborate on the test like the ads from 2017-18.

Thus, we see that overall, the Type 2 diabetes ad used a lot more informational strategy (ration), and the ones that used animals had the sensory element to it in terms of its visual appeal (combination).

4.9 Youth Vaping Program

American Lung Association with the Ad Council has a campaign called “Talk about Vaping” that targets adults- parents, and caregivers to discuss vaping problems. Vaping has become health endemic, with nearly 8000 kids vaping every day, and how parents and caregivers tackle this issue can play a crucial role in preventing this habit.
4.9.1 About the Ads

There were two ads and both by Hill Holliday, and both were 30-second ads. The first ad focused on denial by parents about the possibilities of their child taking up vaping and the other about the lack of understanding of what vaping is and if it can be harmful like cigarettes.

The concept used in both these ads was “getting your head out of the cloud,” a symbolic way of saying how parents were ignorant to the problems of vaping. Both the ads used soft music with adults whose face was hidden with the cloud above their head, and they faced the camera talking. The ads represented diverse people, covering different races. As the parents spoke about their perspectives, text appeared as a counterargument on screen, mainly falsifying vaping myths. Colors were similar for both the ads and used grey and white clouds.

4.9.2 Creative Strategy

Both the ads used ration creative strategy to explain the reasons and provided statistical data on how many kids vape and problems with vaping. The ad used the informational side of the wheel to counter the ignorance and assumptions on vaping.

The following table provides the summary of the ads under other health message category and the creative strategies used in these ads. It also provides additional information about the ad title, length, and the information about the side of the wheel.
Table 1: Summary of ads from other categories of PSAs considered for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disease</th>
<th>Ad title</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Creative Strategy</th>
<th>Side of the wheel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alzheimer's Awareness</td>
<td>Shon and Theresa</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cynthia and Ed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julie and Les</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopeful Judith</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopeful Terrie</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopeful Tom/Levi</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Awareness</td>
<td>The Big Day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Paints</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Plays</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Sings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julia Revised</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flu Vaccination</td>
<td>No time for flu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High BP</td>
<td>Release the Pressure</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung Cancer Screening</td>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute</td>
<td>Ration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet the Scan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saved by the Scan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Mental Health</td>
<td>KAMAUU Music Video</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>Whatever Gets you talking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seize the Awkward</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Awkward Silence</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Disease</td>
<td>Ad title</td>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Creative Strategy</td>
<td>Side of the wheel</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Program</td>
<td>North Carolina - Take the risk test</td>
<td>30 Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Diabetes Revised Risk test Puppies</td>
<td>Risk test hedgehogs Change the outcome</td>
<td>60 Ration Acute</td>
<td>Sensory Combination</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 Diabetes Youth Vaping Program</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>30 Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What's Inside</td>
<td>30 Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.10 Coronavirus Response Campaigns

In addressing the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the Ad Council, CDC, CDC Foundation, Infectious Disease Society of America, and AARP collaborated to convey messages appropriate to addressing the coronavirus’s spread. The ads were created by NBC Universal, Entercom, NY Governor’s Office, Big star, Dentsu, McGarrybowen. In addition, the Ad Council partnered with the federal government, public health partners, and major media networks and digital platforms to launch multi-channel national PSAs.

4.10.1 About the Ads

The television ads under this category listed were constantly removed and changed during the period of the pandemic. However, the researcher downloaded the ads before the website took them down. Thus, twenty-six ads were available at the time of the data collection for this study. The ads were all from the period of 2020 (mostly ranging from July to November). The ads were a mix of 15, 30, and 60 seconds.

Some campaigns that were 15 seconds also had a 30-second comprehensive version and followed the same campaign theme.

The ads addressed key themes like coping during the pandemic for mental health, wearing masks, social distancing, encouraging safe behavior, addressing the courage and contribution of essential workers, doctors, nurses, and retailers, reaching out to younger kids and parents through collaboration with Sesame Street workshops and also addressing myths around coronavirus.
The ads used different creative strategies depending on the type of campaign. In addition, some of the campaigns also addressed specific demographics like the black community. This section will elaborate on the different groups of coronavirus ads.

4.10.2 Sesame Street Collaboration

Amongst the three ads that targeted parents through their children, the ads used Sesame Street characters to communicate the message. “Back to school with Elmo,” “Healthy Habits with Grover,” and “Wear a Mask for Oscar.” The three used ration creative strategies that communicated how one could wear a mask, wash hands, keep a safe distance, avoid school to choose online education, and other common strategies to tackle the pandemic.

The school ads were from early 2020 when schools were following either online classes or a hybrid model. The colors for these ads were bright and followed the Sesame Street theme. The tagline for these ads was #caringforeachother, which was shown in the end. The music was mild, and the ads were either 60 seconds or 30 seconds. Thus, all three of these ads belonged to the informational side of the wheel (ration).

4.10.3 Partying and Long Haulers: Back to School

Two ads titled “Partying” and “Long Haulers” canceled out the myths surrounding COVID-19. These ads for 30 seconds began with addressing how one can party with one another or go out immediately after recovery from coronavirus. These ads addressed the myths around coronavirus spread. The ads were for back to school. The ad used a model who appeared to be a doctor falsifying the myth of these statements—these used ration
strategies to communicate the information. Thus, these belonged to the informational side of the wheel (ration).

**4.10.4 Coping -19 Series**

There were four Coping series of ads, with one of them a comprehensive 30 second which covered all the elements discussed in the mini-series. The comprehensive one addressed how one can deal with exercise, travel to work, or mindfulness. The focus of the message was to ask consumers to cope with the various stressors during the pandemic and find ways that can help them get through the same. The mini versions of coping-19 were of 15 seconds. All of the ads in this series used only text and voice-over to communicate the message. The music was mild, colors were pleasant, and reflected light gray and blues or reflected the ad's settings. It did not specify a target audience, but the images indicated that the ad targeted young adults from 25 plus. It gave tips on coping with everyday things like being mindful, only focusing on things that one can control, and exercising. The mindfulness ad showed how one could use meditation and other spiritual techniques to cope with the pandemic. The ad gave tips on incorporating exercise into everyday routine, and the third one was about handling fear of the unknown by focusing on things one can control like masking, maintaining social distancing, and sanitizing. These ads carried the tagline coping-19 and gave websites that would help people with questions about the same.

As for the strategy used by the ads, this series employed the routine strategy by incorporating everyday activities. Even though the ad used terms to indicate fear, emotions, and feelings over the loss during COVID-19 or overwhelmed by the restrictions around
this pandemic, the ad uses soft music and images that indicate how everyday routine can help get through the complicated process. Thus, the Coping-19 series used an informational strategy (routine).

4.10.5 MASK UP AMERICA Series

There were a lot of ads under this that used the #maskupamerica or the tagline of Mask Up America in the end. These ads are listed below title wise.

4.10.5.1 Famous Last Words

This was a 30-second ad that dispelled the myths of youngsters claiming they will not die because of COVID-19. It showed a montage of newspaper clippings or audio bits of young people saying that youngsters were not at high risk for COVID-19. However, for every claim made by a young adult about not falling sick, there was a counterargument in the visual with images and clippings from newspaper headlines. These headlines carried statements like “a 22-year-old or a 25-year-old passed away because of COVID-19. The tagline for this ad was “Famous last words,” and the music was dramatic.

The goal was also to Mask up America, as the message was to say, not to ignore the masks as COVID-19 can impact any age. The strategy used was acute (inducing fear through those messages) and rational as the ad showed newspaper clips and falsified the myths around claims of not getting infected by COVID-19 based on age. Thus, this ad fell under the informational side of the wheel (acute and ration).
4.10.5.2 *Come On America*

One of the earlier ads was when a paucity of masks and delayed shipments led to empty aisles at the retailers. This 30-second ad titled “Come on America” teased the audience about getting the masks when they have come back to shelves. The goal of this message was to address wearing masks and show the struggles in procuring enough masks. The ad depicted these empty aisles, supply chain, and finally, a child in a cape-wearing a mask with energetic music. The ad did not specifically ask anyone to wear a mask; instead, it teased the audience about choosing to purchase when the masks were available. Thus, ego strategy was used in this ad campaign. This fell under the transformational side of the wheel (ego).

4.10.5.3 *It's your shift*

Another ad in the Mask up America series was titled “It is your shift,” a 30-second ad that showed images of different people who worked as essential workers: retailers, police, doctors, and nurses, who continued to step out and work during the pandemic as well. The music was energetic and motivating, and the ad continuously used the #maskup hashtag ad. It addressed how these people who worked ten or 12-hour shifts wore masks and how it makes it essential for the rest of us to wear them at least for that 1 or 2 hours when we stepped out to do our chores. The final tagline was MASK UP AMERICA, which appeared in red and blue. It used Ego strategy as it addressed an individual to take up the responsibility to wear the masks. Thus comparing, it against those mask-wearing continuously. This was also on the transformational side of the wheel (ego).
4.10.5.4 Lucha

Lucha, a Mexican street fight, was the title of another 30 seconds that had videos and short clips of boxing and wrestling matches and used the terms like a battle, opponent, and letting one’s guard down to show how the fight against coronavirus was not over yet and one must not let one’s guard down and wear masks. The fight was between the virus and the mask, and it said masks could help fight the opponent. The ad discussed the ways can help keep the opponent at bay - here the virus. The strategy used here was a combination of acute and ration. The acute strategy was evident in how the mask and virus were conveyed like a fight and watching out an opponent. The ad conveyed a danger in not wearing a mask. The ration strategy advised the audience to wear a mask and keep the opponent at bay (as it appeared at the end of the ad). Thus, the informational side of the wheel (acute and ration).

4.10.5.5 Mask Up – MLB

Another ad from the Mask Up series addressed the fans of MLB - Major League Baseball. The ad showed random individuals wearing a cap with their favorite team’s logo and a mask at different outdoor spaces. Again, #maskup was constantly present throughout the ad and in the tagline. The ad’s voice-over message addressed how they respected the game even if people rooted for different teams. Though this was like other Mask Up ads, there was no mention of wearing masks, except the hashtag and the tagline. Thus, it uses the social strategy of the wheel. Therefore, these ads used the transformational side of the wheel.
4.10.5.6 Mask Up- My Cheat Code

To target gamers on Twitch, a 30-second commercial used the tagline “my mask is my cheat code” and used a famous twitch player and influencer, Techniq, addressing messages from his fans or fellow players about wearing a mask. Using emojis to capture the “mask up America” theme, the color of the ad represents the twitch platform. Though it was a gaming platform, the influencer advised everyone at the end of the ad to wear a mask so they could move to the next level of meeting face-to-face. The ad used a combination of social along with ration strategy wheel. Therefore, this ad used a combination strategy (social and ration).

4.10.5.7 Mask Up America- You have my Respect

To target gamers on Twitch, a 30-second commercial used the tagline “my mask is my cheat code” and used a famous twitch player and influencer, Techniq, addressing messages from his fans or fellow players about wearing a mask. Using emojis to capture the “mask up America” theme, the color of the ad represents the twitch platform. Though it was a gaming platform, the influencer advised everyone at the end of the ad to wear a mask so they could move to the next level of meeting face-to-face. The ad used a combination of social along with ration strategy wheel. Therefore, this ad used a combination strategy (social and ration).

4.10.5.8 For the love of

In another 30 second ad titled “For the Love of,” the message conveyed how if one wants to go back to things that one loves, then one must mask up. The hashtag
#maskupamerica appeared throughout the ad. This predominantly captured the social element in the ad because it showed all the elements one missed during the pandemic. However, it also conveyed how one can mask up to go back to the things we love. With bright, sunny music, this ad used both social strategy and ego strategy. Thus, this ad used the informational side of the wheel

4.10.5.9 Show some love

Show Some Love”, a 30-seconder ad, showed people in different locations standing tall and confident with their masks on as the words: respect, give them a damn, show how it is done “all appear behind in huge bold block fonts. The message also has a jingle that says, “we are the chosen ones.” This ad used the ego strategy to appreciate those who wore masks; therefore, transformational.

4.10.5.10 Forward

With motivating music, this 30-second ad depicted people in masks and used the terms “stop the spread, stay home, fight the spread, mask up.” It was a direct message to follow steps to move forward from the pandemic. Therefore, it used an informational strategy (ration).

4.10.6 YOU WILL SEE ME

This is also a series of campaigns to initiate and inform people to wear masks. There were three types of “You will see me”- “Anthem, Entertainers, and Musicians.”

These ads addressed and used only famous black people who explained why they chose to wear a mask. The Anthem ad was 60 seconds long, and the other two were 30-
second ads each. The ads were created by the 3 AM/Wild Card Creative group, which targeted black audiences. The ads carried the same theme of “You Will See Me,” wearing a mask and choosing to protect while playing other roles. The message was empowering, like the music that was motivating. The strategy used for this series was “Ego,” It empowered individuals who took to wearing masks and spoke about their identity – as a son, daughter, fighter, and musician. Therefore, under the transformational side of the wheel. This ad specifically targeted black audiences.

4.10.7 Power of Us

This 30-second commercial targeted the black community specifically to address the joint measures the community must take to counter the spread of coronavirus. Though Twitch sponsored the ad, it does not use the brand’s color, unlike the other Twitch influencer ad. The message addresses how coronavirus has shattered the black community. Statistical information about how many black lives were lost appeared as text next to the screen. Nadeska and Bun B take turns talking about how the community is suffering. The terms used “power of us” and “our black lives” gave rational information about following the norms to avoid the spread of coronavirus and save black lives. Rational and social strategies were used to show the community’s power and explain why the community has to come together. Thus, this ad used a combination strategy.

4.10.8 #OutThereForUs

This campaign is one of the earliest campaigns under coronavirus ads. It shares a thank you message to the essential workers, retailers, law enforcement, doctors, and nurses
who were working even during the peak of the pandemic to keep the rest of the world safe at home. The entire ad had a jingle and happy music with videos and images of all kinds of people from different walks of life who are tirelessly working. The ad also has a constant #message of #OutThereForUs There are “thank you” messages for these people that are tweets by friends and family shown outdoor at subways, billboards, and other places. This strategy used here was Social as it was a way to thank them for contributing to society. Therefore, using the transformational side of the wheel.

4.10.9 #AloneTogether

This campaign had two ads. A 15-second ad aired during the early part of the pandemic in 2020 to encourage staying home and safe even during a pandemic. The other was explicitly geared towards the holiday season and was a 30-second commercial encouraging people to avoid parties and stay home and virtually celebrate with family and friends. The messages constantly carried #AloneTogether in its campaign, and the ad used only text against a bright, pleasant background, with gentle music. The music for the holiday version used holiday music. The ads were direct and communicated information to encourage a particular behavior for the pandemic. This was a ration strategy and belonged to the informational side of the wheel.

The following table provides the summary of the ads under coronavirus response category and the creative strategies used in these ads. It also provides additional information about the ad title, length, and the information about the side of the wheel.
Table 2: Summary of Coronavirus response ads from the Ad Council used for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad title</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Creative Strategy</th>
<th>Side of the wheel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping 19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping 19- exercise</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping 19- Mindfulness</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping-19 Control</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will See Me-Anthem</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Will See Me-Entertainers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will See Me-Musicians</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous Last Words</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have my respect</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the love of</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Show some love</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
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<tr>
<td>It's your shift</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
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<td>#OutThereforUs</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social Ration</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucha</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acute Ration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come On America</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Transformational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alone Together</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alone Together- Holiday</td>
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<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Us</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration Social</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
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<td>My Mask is my cheat code</td>
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<td>Social Ration</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mask Up America -MLB</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social Ration</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
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<td>Back to School with Elmo</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wear a mask for Oscar</td>
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<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Habits with Grover</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partying</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Haulers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.11 COVID-19 Vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign was an initiative sponsored by the Ad Council in collaboration with COVID Collaborative. COVID Collaborative is an organization of experts who do scientific research and share information to increase vaccination acceptance and dispel myths surrounding vaccination to create a preventive measure for a safer society. The campaign is one of the most extensive vaccination drives in the history of the United States. The $50 million campaign was one of the most extensive drives in the United States. The research from the COVID-19 collaborative brought insights into how or what kind of communities were skeptical about the vaccine, which helped create customized campaigns to address the different groups of the society.

4.11.1 About the Ads

The ads for the COVID-19 vaccination drive were from agencies like Alma, iHeart Radio, Ad Council Content studio, Wordsworth & Booth Group SJR, Deutsch, NBC universal, Joy Collective, Pereira O'Dell, Facebook Creative Shop, New Fangled, Sesame Workshop, and Saatchi & Saatchi. The ads were 15, 30, or 60 seconds in length. Some of them were a series and had many ads under the same type of messaging. This section will elaborate on the ads. Some ads specifically targeted black audiences. The agency that worked on these ads specific to the Black community was Joy Collective.

4.11.2 Tuskegee Legacy Campaign

This series mainly addressed to the black audiences has five ads. All of the ads are of 60 seconds in length and one teaser ad for 15 seconds. For the analysis, the teaser was
omitted. The campaign fights misinformation about comparing the COVID-19 vaccine with the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Three of the ads featured Freddie Lee Tyson’s (a member of that study) family – daughter, nephew, and granddaughter. The people addressed their ancestor’s plight in the past and how it was unfair to compare that with the current pandemic and vaccine. The ad advised people to ignore these messages and focus on one’s health, legacy, and family and take up the opportunity that had come their way. The other two ads featured a woman whose ancestors- both grandfathers belonged to the study. She was pursuing environmental health because of the influence of her ancestors. She also addressed the vulnerabilities faced by the black community and how the opportunity to get vaccinated should not be missed. The last of the series showed a man with his daughters whose ancestors were part of the study. The older man had taken the shot to honor his legacy and family. All the ads used ego as the strategy. The ads empowered and motivated the audience to do the right thing for their legacy, community, and themselves. Therefore, the ads all fell under the transformational side of the wheel.

4.11.3 Loading…

Two of the ads under this theme used old videos to showcase moments in the past when children played and enjoyed a carefree life. The ads of 30-second length focused on protecting one’s children and getting the vaccination. It used the line ‘resuming moments like this and gave a nostalgic feel to the ad. Thus, we can see the social strategy wheel being used as the predominant creative strategy. Therefore, the transformational side of the wheel.
4.11.4 Do it for me

This campaign featured pairs of people talking to each other under a setup where they videotaped the conversation. This campaign targeted only young adults between 16-35. The featured pair were siblings, couples, and friends, where one of them was hesitant about getting the shot, whereas the other had taken the vaccination. The conversations were around the hesitance and points to deter them from that decision. The campaign 'Do it for me' featured random sets of pairs for 60 seconds.

There were four ads, including the title 'Do it for me'. A shoot-off of the same campaign had a few of those pairs discussing their apprehensions in detail. Two of them, Kat and Cal, Waseem and Akeem, were for 30 seconds. Duke and Asha were for 60 seconds. The Duke and Asha had a doctor (shown as a doctor) and another woman who discussed the vaccine's possibility of impacting reproductive health. All ads used a similar strategy: ration and acute (since the characters used fear and fear during the conversation). Therefore, under the informational side of the wheel.

4.11.5 Parents

These campaigns by the Ad Council Content Studio were short 15-second ads that used animated text in bright backgrounds and colors, with sharp images of parents with children (older teenage kids). The ads are intended for parent audiences and are a question-answer type that answers short and most asked questions about the vaccine. These were primarily informational and hence, under the ration wheel. There were three ads, and they answered the following questions: (i) why should one get vaccinated, (ii) the cost of getting
vaccinated, and (iii) how does one protect their children? Therefore, the ads used the ration wheel of creative strategy under the informational side of the wheel.

4.11.6 Informed Decision

This series of campaigns were about 15 seconds, and they were also from the Ad Council Content Studio. The ads pose the various questions people have about COVID-19 vaccines and prompt them to seek their answers at GetVaccineAnswers.org. All these ads have the same tagline of "It is up to you." There were five ads, all following the same colors, music, similar length, and creative strategy. The ads used the ration wheel of creative strategy. Therefore, under the informational side of the wheel.

4.11.7 Back to life V1-V2

The two ads by NBC Universal showed how vaccines could help one get back to the old times of travel and other plans. However, they do not elaborate on this; instead, they pose questions that people commonly ask about the vaccine and answer the same. The ad encourages the audience to look at the website getvaccineanswers.org for more details. The ads are 30 seconds each and use bright mild colors and gentle, upbeat music. Both the ads addressed questions and gave answers, thereby falling under the ration strategy (informational side of the wheel).

4.11.8 Concerts and Feelings

These are also ads targeting black audiences, and both were for 30-second ads. The ‘Concerts’ ad featured younger black adults in real-life playing, partying, and suddenly having people asking questions about the vaccine-like, should I get it? The ad
ends with the line- it is good to ask questions and invites people to look at the website to get answers about the COVID-19 vaccine. Thus, this ad uses both the information and transformational side - the ad used social and ration strategy.

In the ‘Feelings’ campaign, the ad featured different people who spoke about things they missed during the pandemic, like grandmother missing grandkids, kids missing schools, and field trips, while the voice-over mentioned how the vaccines could help get back to the things people missed. Thus, the ad used social strategy, thereby, the transformational side of the wheel.

In the ‘College life’ ad campaign, the 60-second commercial featured black students dancing, playing, and walking on a college campus. The ad used music, peppy and celebratory, and encouraged the audience to ask questions and take the vaccine. The message used is "we need facts." Since it featured a college setting, the theme uses a social element to the ad. However, the message drove the point of getting facts and making an informed decision. Thus, it used both social and ration strategies. Therefore, following a combination strategy.

4.11.9 Country Music

Pierea O’Dell agency’s creation of ‘Country music’ ad featured a few people who stand out in the concert hall and face the empty seats in a theatre and talk about how much they miss their performances, and they encourage their audiences to get informed about the vaccines and get the shot so they can go back to the performances like before. This uses the ration strategy because they discuss the need to get informed about and make decisions.
This 60-second ad is meant for all audiences. Thus, the ad used the informational side of the wheel.

4.11.10 Grandma

This was one of the only ads that specifically featured a Latino family. This 60-second ad features a grandma getting dressed and ready while the background plays the old song "I will be seeing you." In the climax of the ad, the family joined together in all smiles, as the text said how these moments could be the future with the vaccine. Thus, this used the emotional side of the wheel - social strategy, transformational side of the wheel.

4.11.11 Sesame Street Ads

There were three Sesame Street ads that targeted parents and used characters from Sesame Street. ‘Healthy Family’ was a 30-second commercial, while the ‘Feeling Hopeful’ and ‘Sunny Days Ahead’ were both 60-second commercials. Below is the elaboration for each of these titles.

4.11.11.1 Healthy Family

This 30-second commercial featured Elmo and his dad, where Elmo plays pretend to play with his dad as a doctor and gives him a healthy sticker. The dad character speaks about why adults need to be healthy for their children, and thus, getting vaccinated is the way. The tagline uses: Sunny days are ahead. This ad used a ration strategy (informational side of the wheel).
4.11.11.2 Feeling hopeful

This 60-second commercial also featured Elmo and his dad as they discussed what they were excited about, like playdates, cookouts, and all the fun things of meeting family and friends. Thus, talking about how they will help get back to those moments missed. This ad used a social, creative strategy (transformational side).

4.11.11.3 Sunny Days Ahead

The last Sesame Street collaboration is Sunny Days Ahead, a jingle with the old song - “I will be seeing you,” with the letter ‘U’ moving around in the Sesame Street kind of world that shows many fun activities and events outdoor. The tagline of sunnier days ahead is used at the end of the ad. This ad also used a transformational side of the wheel with social strategy. The visuals are bright and colorful, and there is an indirect sensory feel to the whole setting of the ad.

4.11.12 Vax Explainer- Delta

The last ad was a 30-second ad that explained the contagious delta variant and only used animated text and a voice-over to make informed decisions about the vaccine and how the vaccine could help one from the delta variant. Again, this was on the informational side of the wheel - with ration strategy.

The following table provides the summary of the ads under COVID-19 vaccine category and the creative strategies used in these ads. It also provides additional information about the ad title, length, and the information about the side of the wheel.
Table 3: Summary of Coronavirus vaccination ads from the Ad Council used in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad title</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Creative Strategy</th>
<th>Side of the wheel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Carmen</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Elise</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Lillie</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Omar</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Leo</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuskegee Legacy: Teaser</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vax Explainer Delta</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading -- Front Flip</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading -- -- Surprise</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do it for me</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ration Acute</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley and Akeem</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration Acute</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat and Cal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration Acute</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke and Asha</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ration Acute</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: How much does it cost?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: Why get vaccinated?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: How can I protect?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Decision- Impact on pregnancy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed decision- How are vaccines monitored?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Decision- Does it cost anything?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Decision- Long term side effects?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Decisions: How do vaccines protect?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad title</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Creative Strategy</th>
<th>Side of the wheel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Family</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Hopeful</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunny Days Ahead</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to life- V1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to life - V2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Life</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social Ration</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerts</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ration Social</td>
<td>Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Music</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ration</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transformational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.12 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is the process of identifying the patterns and themes in the qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a “method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail.” While defining themes, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2020) define it as “that which captures something important about the data concerning the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.”

Using the step-by-step process of thematic analysis as suggested and formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher used the five-step process to identify the themes. The thematic analysis process helps address the second research question (RQ2). RQ2 is about the overall themes in health and wellness PSAs. From figure (3), six key themes emerge from the data, along with various sub-themes.

As shown in Figure 3, six prominent themes emerged from the data.

The six themes are as follows:

- Prevention
- Routine
- Informed Decision
- Dispel Myths
- Doing our part
- Being there
Figure 3: Overall themes emergent from the data for all PSAs
4.12.1 Prevention

Prevention is the critical theme amongst most of the health and wellness PSAs. Some preventive health and wellness ads used early diagnosis, early detection, reversal of issues, and observing changes to seek help. For instance, in the Type 2 diabetes campaign, the critical theme used was how the test to detect Prediabetes would help reverse the onset of diabetes in the future. The text in the ad quotes, “North Carolina residents with prediabetes can enroll in a free or low-cost national diabetes prevention program.” Alternatively, in another campaign, “Prediabetes is a serious medical condition that puts you at high risk for type2 diabetes and 1 in 3 American adults has Prediabetes and more than 80% do not know they have it. Can be reversed.” The main sub-themes under prevention include reversal, seeking help, early detection, early diagnosis, and observing changes.

4.12.2 Routine

The second key theme in most of these campaigns was following routine activities to help maintain and practice good health. For instance, in the High BP ad, the ad conveys the message to follow a routine to make sure healthy BP goals are met. The main sub-themes under routine include a healthy lifestyle, practicing good habits, health maintenance. This can be embodied in the quotes directly from the ads themselves, such as: “Routines like staying active or talking to friends can keep you centered...” or “…if your numbers are high. Monitor them regularly.”
These two key themes overlap each other as both prevention and routine go together. Practicing a routine and healthy lifestyle can help prevent most diseases.

4.12.3 Informed Decisions

Most health and wellness campaigns, especially the coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccine, encouraged making informed decisions. These are evident from how these ads used the term “make informed decisions,” “ask questions,” and so on. In COVID-19 vaccine ads, commentaries such as “Let us make an informed decision. Together,” or “we need the facts,” or “It is okay to have questions. Now get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines at vaccineanswers.org so you can make an informed decision for yourself and your family.”, emphasize this theme on the importance of making informed decisions.

4.12.4 Dispel Myths

The other key theme is about dispelling myths to understand health and wellness concerns. For the Tuskegee study, there is combating misinformation about the unfair comparison between the two scenarios. Other ads had addressed myths directly by using the term ‘myth.’ For example: “MYTH: If you get COVID-19, you will recover after a few days. That myth is false.”

Again, informed decisions and dispelling myths overlap as we need facts to combat misinformation. Likewise, doing this is also a way of making informed decisions. A direct quote from the COVID-19 vaccine Tuskegee campaign, “That is very different from what is happening with COVID-19. The vaccine is being made available to anyone who wants
it—even those who find themselves in the space of hesitancy. We must have patience and give them the requisite information that they need. That they can make an informed decision. However, let us do it out of love,” emphasizes this aspect further.

4.12.5 Being there

Health and wellness messages are always about support and being there for family or friends. The key theme in most of the ads was about being there for someone (like Alzheimer’s), offering protection (protecting children), reaching out and communicating when in need (suicide prevention and mental health), and also something like heroes of the community (thanking essential workers for their contribution).

Like in the Alzheimer’s Ad: “When my son told me, “Mom, I do not want you to be worried or be afraid. I will be there for you, and we will figure it out. He has been such a positive force and so loving.” Or in the Coronavirus Campaign: Heroes of community, ad, a quote from the transcript, “You are the engine that makes all things go. And you are always in disguise, my hero. I see your light in the dark, smile in my face when we all know it’s hard. There’s no way to ever pay you back. Bless your heart, no, I love you for that. Honest and selfless,” emphasizes the aspect of being there.

4.12.6 Doing our part

This comes from helping society move forward by taking up responsibilities (like masking), rooting for each other, protecting one’s community. The ads quote like the following show the same. This theme is also empowering to give self-responsibility and do things to earn respect and improve society. In the Coronavirus Response Campaign:
“Even though there is so much against us, you will see me choose to protect myself and my community from the coronavirus by wearing a face cover because it is going to take all of us thinking about one another, and even with my face covered, you will see me.”

As well as “Wear a mask for yourself and your community.” Or “I may never have met you. We do not go way back. Maybe we would not even be friends if we did. But when you wear a mask, you have my respect. Because your mask does protect you, it protects me. I wear my mask to protect you.” These quotes further reinforce the message of doing our part (or taking responsibility) as we tackle the pandemic.

4.13 Summary of the Findings

These critical themes overall do showcase the overall creative strategies used by the campaigns. For instance, these show the social, routine, rational, acute strategies commonly used in the ads. For instance, preventive themes focus on early diagnosis and hence, acute strategy. Likewise, informed decisions focus on asking questions and facts, and hence, ration strategy. Being there focuses on offering support, reaching out, which are social strategies. Finally, routine focuses on a healthy lifestyle and practicing good habits attributed to the routine creative strategy.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss how the study answered the research questions. The research questions for this study (see Introduction) mainly focused on the strategies employed by the health and wellness PSAs, including (RQ1) understanding the overall strategies used by coronavirus response and COVID-19 vaccine campaigns. An allied question also dealt with comparing these messaging strategies with other public health messages. This study used ads from the Ad Council to answer these research questions.

To answer the sub-questions within RQ1, we used Taylor's strategy wheel. The study found that out of the sample data that fall under the coronavirus and COVID-19 vaccine campaigns, most of them used the informational side of the wheel for their creative strategy. Of this, ration creative strategy was the most often used. Compared to other individual ads from other health and wellness PSA messages, the results indicate that the informational strategy was used by the non-corona messages. In addition, most of the ads used ration and acute creative strategies.

The ads were examined for the creative strategies by using Taylor's Strategy Wheel (1999). All the ads in all disease categories used different strategies from the wheel, mainly restricting to ration, social, ego, routine, and acute. Sensory was only visually used in one of the ads without any explicit text by visuals and pleasant music. This was only in public health advertising messages (non-covid), using hedgehogs or puppies in Type 2 Diabetes ads. The ads that used a combination of strategies were coded for that separately. The
process of examining how the creative strategies were used and communicated for the different public health messages is offered as an interpretation.

A study by Deng et al. (2020), studying the ads released globally from March to September 2020 on Ads of the world website, found that the COVID-19 ads were more transformational and social than informational. This contrasts with the results from this study, as the ads were more informational, even though the overall transformational ads were not any lesser. In the past, a study by Lancaster (2010) found that message strategies used in health-related PSAs were more transformational than informational. However, in this study, the researcher used all categories of PSAs like alcohol, drug, and other safety ads.

This dissertation focused only on television commercials listed under the health and wellness tab of the Ad Council's website, and the results show a lot more informational ads than transformational. Even though the Lee, Taylor, and Chung (2011) study of creative strategies using Taylor's Strategy Wheel observed the changes in advertising messages of financial company ads during an economic crisis between 2005-2009, the results highlighted a critical point that society's complex and speculative periods meant a shift in more rational messaging to help consumer decision making. Although this study did not analyze the historical aspect of how PSAs have evolved, this could be why the current set of PSAs used more informational strategies to provide ration and reason for decision making. However, it is also important to note that though more ads were using
informational strategies (overall from all categories), the coronavirus-related ads emanated a more transformational feel in those messages.

This section will discuss each of the creative strategies from Taylor's Wheel in detail regarding the public health advertising messages.

5.1.1 Ration Strategy

Both the COVID-19 related campaigns and the other health messages prominently used ration as a strategy. There was not much difference in how all these different disease types used the same strategy. For instance, in the general health messages under Type 2 diabetes prevention ads, the North Carolina Prevention Program used ration as a strategy to share statistical information about pre-diabetes and how the audience/viewer could also be susceptible to it. Thus, to help realize the possibility of such a health condition and reverse the same, the message shared what the North Carolina program can do to help state residents.

In the combined COVID-19 campaigns, the messages shared information about the questions related to COVID-19 vaccines or offered information about the various steps to combat the spread of the virus. For instance, in the sesame street ad with 'healthy habits with Grover,' the character explains the many steps like "wear a mask, employ social distance, wash one's hands," and so on. Thus, it was a clear message as to how to combat the spread of corona. A similar strategy was used in the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns that used a question-and-answer series with the 'parent's ad. These raised pertinent questions on parents' minds about the vaccination and their teenage children while offering answers to
questions such as "how much does the vaccine cost, or how can one protect their children" and so on. Thus, there is no difference in how the rational strategy was employed in the two different categories of public health messages. However, the study also showed that ration was employed only in those disease types that could offer early detection and prevention. For instance, the ad messages about scans for Lung cancer prevention and Type-2 diabetes prevention. There was also ration as a strategy used in a few of the Alzheimer's Awareness advertisements; however, those used a combination and not a stand-alone strategy.

5.1.2 Social Strategy

The next most commonly used strategy was the social strategy among all types of health messages. However, more ads were using social strategy exclusively amongst the COVID-19 vaccine ads from the combination of coronavirus-related campaigns. If we analyze the coronavirus campaigns, among the response campaigns, the second most used strategy was ego strategy after the ration strategy. Even though the overall COVID-19 campaigns (includes both the coronavirus response and the vaccine) used a higher number of social strategies.

There was also a difference in how the social strategy was used in the coronavirus-related ads versus other health messages. The health messages that used exclusive and explicit social strategies were those diseases requiring family or friend support for the patient. For instance, the mental health-related ads, suicide prevention ads used social
creative strategy to communicate to the audience to reach out to their friend or family that could help the mental health of their friend or family.

Suicide is a leading cause of death among young adults, and the transformational message strategies targeted the friends and family to reach out and communicate to their friends who might be at risk for suicide. Thus, though limited, the ads were targeting not the individual who needed support but their friends and family. This is partially supported by previous studies demonstrating how preventive messages addressed to high-risk and depressed individuals have had no impact (Klimes-Dougan and Lee, 2010).

The middle school mental health initiative, also a recent from the Ad Council to address the pandemic stress among young children, promoted more conversations among parents and caregivers with their middle school children. It also used social strategy to collaborate with artists to use their music as a form of expression. Past research does indicate how the family intervention among youth saw a reduced growth of anti-social behavior, alcohol use, and marijuana among the youngsters through their middle school years (Stormshak et al., 2011).

Autism research shows that the symptom of autism is not identified among children specifically within the vulnerable population (Valicenti-McDermott et al., 2012). In addition, there is very little knowledge about the strategies or advertising messages within the autism awareness campaigns. From this study, we see how the social strategy was used in all the ads. For instance, the Sesame Street collaboration ads used in Autism awareness used a character ‘Julia’ and created a series of six-second ads that used social as a strategy
as the ad did not use the term ‘sooner’ or explicitly say how to identify. Instead, these six-seconders used just playing, singing, and other activities that children typically enjoy. Thus, the use of social here was different from the suicide prevention or mental health advertisements.

For the coronavirus vaccine campaigns, the social strategy showcased the fun and social events one missed during pre-pandemic days. For instance, in the ‘Grandma’ campaign featuring a Latino family that did not use any explicit text but used visual imagery and music with old song lyrics of “I’ll be seeing you” and communicated the moments of family get-together post as a possibility in the future with the vaccine availability and acceptance.

In the coronavirus response campaigns, the focus was to combat the spread of the virus, and thus, social activities were not focused. Instead, the onus was on the individual to make the wise choices to stay socially distant and masked. Thus, only the #Outthereforus campaign used social creative strategy to address the gratefulness to a particular community sect who have been braving the pandemic and continuing to work and serve the public, like the essential workers, grocery store employees, doctors, and nurses. The Mask UP-MLB ad did not use explicit terms to explain the social strategy but used visual elements to indicate how they respected the choices despite rooting for different teams. The whole ad used a social strategy appeal to show the unity in wearing a mask. This was also in contrast to the other Mask-up series ads that employed ego strategy. Thus, there is a difference in how the social strategy was used in all these categories of disease types.
5.1.3 Ego Strategy

Ego as an independent strategy was used in the COVID-19 campaigns (both vaccine and response). Ego was the second most used strategy for coronavirus response campaigns. Even in a combined COVID-19 campaign, it is not too far behind the use of social strategy ads. However, ego as an exclusive strategy was not used for general health campaigns. The reason for such a difference must be in how the COVID-19 campaigns were approached. The pandemic ads had a few that offered to empower messages to encourage people to change behavior and follow COVID-19 protocols to help stop the spread. For instance, the ads in the response messaging for most Mask Up America ads used ego as a strategy. For the ‘Show some love’ campaign, the ad showed people wearing masks standing tall and with their heads held high with the text that constantly appeared behind them as “Show some respect,” “Show the world how it is done,” and “Show them that when your community needed you the most, you showed up.”

Although it is natural for the black community to be apprehensive of vaccine campaigns (e.g., Tuskegee study, which adversely affected Black communities in studying syphilis), there was a need to appeal to the Black community to communicate that coronavirus vaccine were indeed safe for all. Thus, the ego strategy of appealing to oneself and communicating vaccine safety by evoking the Black community’s legacy was a necessary step forward, as far as the Tuskegee legacy series was concerned.

Ego strategy was not used in the ads that were available under the general health messages. One could posit that the messages used here were about precaution; but unlike
a behavioral change required for a pandemic (e.g., to not be hesitant in following new rules of living like masking, socially distancing), the other chronic disease types either focus on following routine, prevention, or early diagnosis, or support from family and friends. Thus, ego was not often used in these ads as a stand-alone strategy.

It is important to note here that the observations are purely made from the number of ads available on the Ad Council’s website, which is somewhat restrictive in drawing broader conclusions. Increasing the sample of ads could potentially alter these findings; however, the rationale behind using these strategies (for coronavirus and/other diseases) will be relevant.

5.1.4 Routine Strategy

Routine as a strategy was only used in the High BP ad of ‘Release the Pressure.’ This ad showed how BP check should also be a regular part of one’s life, like eating and sleeping well. Interestingly, the routine was not used in the COVID-19 vaccine campaigns as well. This could be because there was nothing about the COVID-19 vaccine messages that could be used to shape everyday behavior. Even though wearing a mask or other precautions could be incorporated and communicated as an everyday routine, this strategy was not used in the early parts of the campaign because the messages mainly focused on educating and informing the public about the precautions one could take to contain the spread of the virus.

However, routine as a strategy was only used in just one of the coronavirus responses campaigns. It was only in the Coping-19 series ads that showcased different
ways one could cope during the pandemic. The coping-19 series ad was the most recent ad available under this category of coronavirus response messages. The focus was to help people adjust to the changing new normal and bring in some habits in their everyday life that could help people cope with the stress associated with the loneliness from the pandemic.

These ads might not have used routine yet because of the sudden shift in the paradigm of our lives, and rational messaging, reasoning, or transformational strategies would have been more critical to help find new normal.

5.1.5 Acute Strategy

The acute strategy was used as an exclusive strategy only in the general health messages and not in the coronavirus response or vaccine campaigns. This contrast could be because the pandemic was already creating a pensive and challenging environment, and the use of acute strategy to encourage people to follow something might be dissuading the public from accepting the messages. Even the vaccine campaigns did not use only acute as a strategy to communicate a sense of immediacy or urgency to get vaccinated. However, the Flu vaccine was an exception, and it used the acute strategy even though the ad featured an upbeat tone to its messaging. The ad conveyed having ‘no time for setbacks or falling sick with flu’ and thus communicating the need to get the flu shot. The same style was not employed in COVID-19 vaccine advertisements to encourage getting the vaccines. Here, the vaccine for the pandemic is new and needs more acceptance; hence, the use of acute was only used as a combination with ration strategy.
5.1.6 Sensory Strategy

Sensory was the only strategy from the strategy wheel that was not used independently for any campaigns. Though there was a combination with the ration strategy in visually appealing elements and no explicit messaging for the type-2 diabetes prevention ads with the puppies and hedgehogs, even that was not used in coronavirus campaigns.

5.2 Combination Strategies Used

The ads also used combination strategies that either belonged to two sides of the wheel-informational and transformational or used a combination from the same side of the wheel. This section will discuss more on those findings.

5.2.1 Combination – Ration Strategy

The Ration and Social combination strategy of using a creative strategy from both sides of the wheel was commonly found in all public health messages. However, it was more often used in coronavirus campaigns (both response and vaccine). In the coronavirus campaigns, this combination strategy was used in those ads that spread the message of offering the need to ‘get facts’ and ‘make informed decisions to get back to things people miss and love like their social gatherings, meetups, parties, college life, and concerts. The ration strategy was part of all these coronavirus messages because all these ads employed the need to communicate either statistical information about the spread of the virus or how one could get informed. In the coronavirus response campaign, this combination was used in an ad that targeted specifically black community, and the tagline the ad used was “The
Power of Us” to communicate the need for the black community to join hands to combat the spread of the virus as it was highest amongst the black population.

**Ration and Sensory** were used only in the general health messages and never used in the coronavirus campaigns. Sensory as a strategy was not used explicitly in any of the campaigns. In the Type-2 Diabetes ad, the ad that used animals with the text had a sensory appeal.

Sensory was not often used in most health messages, which could be because none of these health messages focused on appealing to one’s senses. Instead, the focus of most of these campaigns was either preventive or finding help, or early diagnosis, and making informed decisions, or changing behavior.

**5.2.2 Combination - Acute Strategy**

**Acute and Social** as a combination were the highest used in the other health messages and never used in coronavirus campaigns.

This could be because the campaigns that used acute strategy as one of their strategies used ration to offer rational means to approach the coronavirus spread or vaccine information making informed decisions. The acute here would be to show the spread of the virus, like the “Lucha” ad that had projected the virus as an opponent, and not wearing a mask was equated to the fear of losing to the virus. Thus, here the need to provide a rational messaging of solutions to address the problem was essential. Another coronavirus response ad titled “Famous last words” focused on showing how wearing the mask was essential for even the young adults who were assuming that the virus would not impact their lives. This
used an acute strategy to counter the myths around age and coronavirus spread. However, the ad also used some rational appeal to communicate the message of masking up and helping curb the spread of the virus.

In the other health messages like Alzheimer’s or autism awareness, the use of acute was in combination with social because these diseases needed the help and support of family, and awareness for the family was also crucial to help people going through these diseases. Thus, the importance was on offering the sense of urgency or immediacy to take action and meet with the doctor, but at the same time, the ads employed the social side of the family for being there for their loved ones. Alzheimer’s disease is associated with many negative images and stigmatization of old age associated with it (Van Gorp et al., 2012). It is perhaps one of the most significant medical burdens in the United States. As of 2018, in the United States, more than 5.7 million people live with dementia (Alzheimer’s Association, 2018), and it is estimated that the numbers will only continue to grow over the years. Thus, using social as a strategy in combination with acute was essential to communicate the support of family and friends for such people/patients.

In the COVID-19 vaccine ad series of “Do it for me,” though the message was trying to communicate to a loved one about the hesitancy to get vaccinated, the core message was to ‘make informed decisions. The discussion in the ad spoke about why one must not be hesitant and how vaccines can be protective. These ads used acute or a sense of urgency in how the actors or participants in the ad communicate the need to get vaccinated. There is some tearing up and expression of feeling scared in the ad. Though the ad did give a sense
of transformational feel, and some could decipher it as a social message, the ad did focus on making informed decisions together and made it seem like a critical decision to get vaccinated, which resonated with acute strategy.

The Acute strategy used with Ration was present in the other health messages like the lung cancer screening. For example, one of the ads from the categories used a very visually scary way to communicate the need to get an early scan done to screen for lung cancer. However, this visually explicit acute messaging was not used in coronavirus-related campaigns, which could be because of the already prevalent uncertainty around the pandemic.

5.2.3 Combination– Ego Strategy

Ego and Social as a combination were rarely used in other health messages and the coronavirus response message. However, it was not at all used in the COVID-19 vaccine ads. Instead, this was used in the suicide prevention ads that communicated the need to be there for their friends or family who are susceptible or at risk for suicide. This sort of combination puts the onus on the person to be there for their friend: e.g., “to break the awkward silence and communicate.” This contrasted with the “Let’s get talking ad” in the same category that used social strategy.

This strategy was not employed in coronavirus vaccine campaigns because this ego was used as an independent strategy to communicate the need to empower oneself with the vaccine available (Tuskegee legacy ads). However, social was commonly used in combination with ration.
This difference could be because rational messaging was essential to empower people with the information needed to make informed decisions and dispel myths surrounding the pandemic and its vaccine. However, if the ad had to empower, then it used ego as an explicit strategy to show respect and importance to the viewer/audience who decided to wear a mask, chose to get vaccinated.

5.3 Thematic Analysis: Overall Theme Map

The Thematic Analysis has been attested as a practical qualitative approach that helps understand the applied research in health and wellness and provides insights for practices outside academia, like policy and practice (Braun and Clarke, 2014). This dissertation was able to inductively uncover the key themes present in the data of public service ads under the health and wellness category. The themes represent the various points that are addressed in these health messages. These points will help customize the future health messages and will be beneficial to communicators and advertisers. The map provides a way to relay the health messages appropriately. For instance, the themes that emerged from the unknown disease types and addressed hesitancy used the information to help make informed decisions and dispel myths and assumptions associated with that phenomenon. The map communicates that some disease types that are alien, new, and unknown like coronavirus or new kind of smoking -vaping among consumers might be better addressed using messages that provide facts and address the myths.

From the current study, we can only understand the various ways in which such health messages can be addressed to the public. This study also shows how specific
demographic groups have been targeted to address issues related to, say, vaccine hesitancy. These have focused on combating misinformation to address the hesitancy that was due to the past experiences faced by these communities (for instance, Syphilis study). For chronic conditions like Type-2 diabetes, we focus on behavioral interventions that can be evident from messages focusing on prevention and early diagnosis. It is also clear from the data that chronic diseases need to be addressed using messages focused on routine maintenance or prevention. Thus, the map will help provide tailored targeted message strategies that will enhance the relevance of these messages to the right audience. We understand that pandemic diseases like the coronavirus pose a danger to society and individuals. Thus, the current data found that the messages that addressed such issues focused on how individuals can center on their responsibilities and thereby share for the community. However, when it was about addressing issues for someone else's welfare, like a friend or a family member struggling with mental health issues or protecting one's children, the messages resonated with the importance of being there and empathizing with others. Here, the contribution was to individuals in need.

This study does not look at people's meanings or associations about these health issues or the effect of these messages on people.

5.4 Implications for future COVID-19 messaging strategies

Even though the pandemic messages used ration, social, and ego strategies, the overall campaign empowered the audience by stressing “it is up to you” or “mask up America/ you will see me.” This constitutes the most significant difference between
COVID-19 messaging strategies compared to the other health-related campaigns. Thus, the pandemic messaging strategy has had a larger-than-life approach where all aspects of social interactions, mental health, and coping with the effects of the pandemic are being communicated. Again, this is a departure from how other health conditions have been advertised based on what is currently available for the websites.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is drawing to an end (within the US), future pandemic threats from COVID-19 (and other viruses) will still be a threat. New COVID-19 variants are emerging, and some variants more than others will undoubtedly be detrimental to the progress that we have made as a community. Hence it is essential to be vigilant and communicate clearly with the public regarding combating the future spread of the virus. It could in the future become seasonal like the flu, and vaccines could become an annual affair. The hesitancy and misinformation about the vaccine, its effects, and combating the spread of COVID might need constant communication.

COVID-19 is also linked to chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and other diseases, and mental health also has a potential link to covid itself. Research is still ongoing to understand the impact of the viral infection on mental health post-recovery. This means all these health issues are linked together and can potentially snowball into a national crisis if interventions are not developed promptly. For instance, alcohol consumption has increased during the pandemic, and research shows they are linked to other health disorders (Kim et al., 2020).
There is no single way to communicate the importance of staying safe and being prepared with the vaccine. This might need a constant re-evaluation of what constitutes a best-messaging strategy, which means future studies that focus on understanding what meanings people make from these messages and how these messages may shape their behavior and awareness.

This study shows that COVID-19 messaging has predominantly used more of the rational, social, and ego strategies. It has not used routine until the most recent coping-19 series, which focused on mental health during the pandemic. This messaging strategy could be used in the future if the vaccines are going to be an annual ritual; like how the flu season sees an increase in messaging around the flu vaccine, COVID-19 messaging will also be shaped based on the evolving virus. Eventually, as COVID-19 becomes less of a threat as a pandemic (more seasonal), the messaging strategies may evolve to be more individual-focused using acute, routine strategies; however, it may not have this larger-than-life focus that has been currently employed.

5.5 Conclusions

This study aimed to understand the creative strategies used in the Ad council’s health and wellness public health messages. The study’s findings indicate that the health and wellness ads use many more informational strategies (ration, routine, and acute) to communicate health messages to the public. Although this analysis suggests that informational strategies are more prevalent, transformational messages are equally used (as evidenced in Tables 1-3) to communicate critical messages to their audience. Many ads
used a combination strategy- where both the sides of the wheels are used. Most of these ads used social and were followed by ego strategy to communicate.

This study is essential as this is the first step towards future studies that better understand how health messages are presented and targeted. During times like these where political and economic uncertainties and constant scientific updates shape the communication landscape of health messages, this study will pave the way to understand how the audience relates, understands, and makes meaning out of these messages.

Creative strategies are always an essential part of advertising research. It is essential to understand how the changing medium and advertising plans can also shape the decision to use a creative strategy. It will also be essential to understand the meaning-making among audience/consumers. Since the pandemic like the novel coronavirus has had a global impact, it would be interesting also to explore the creative strategies used by public service advertisers across the world. Since the messages are universal to combat and deal with COVID-19 and drive vaccination, it would be essential to explore how these were communicated in the other parts of the world.

In an age where social media activities have surged with misinformation and disinformation campaigns (including “potential dangers of vaccination” or “youngsters are less likely to contract COVID-19”), there is intrinsic importance placed in how reliable sources of information are trusted and validated. Hence appeals such as ‘ration’, ‘routine’, and ‘acute’ (from the informational side of Taylor’s wheel) would influence/ reach their audience in a more targeted way than other means of messaging.
Since the study considered only television ads, the conclusions may be refined further when considering other media (digital/newsprint/radio). However, as noted, multimedia studies in this case (when considering ads in radio and other forms) incorporated the exact text used in the television ads; hence, even leaving out ads used in radio/newsprint may not adversely affect any conclusions drawn from this study.

There are a few limitations to this study. One of the critical limitations was the sample data. In addition, all the health and wellness television ads currently available on the Ad Council’s webpage were only used for the study. This did not allow the study to include the ads from all disease categories (like High BP had only one ad available). The Ad Council also constantly removed and updated their assets on the website, which meant those taken down before the data collection for this research were missing from the study. A larger collection of ads and data availability, including the other media (social and digital media), may potentially transform public health messaging. Future work in this area will explore such ideas. It will also be essential to understand how these messages reach the public and if the intended meanings are communicated to the audience.


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VITA

Meena Trichur Venkat has an interesting upbringing. She belongs to a place called Trichur in Kerala, India. She grew up in different cities and thereby moved to multiple schools during the entire school period. These transitions made her develop a better understanding of different cultures and life itself, that she was always interested in pursuing knowledge. She did her undergrad in Physics from the University of Madras and did a career switch to pursue brands and marketing by doing an MBA from the University of Madras. Upon graduation, she worked as a brand and marketing specialist for a few years before moving to the United States to pursue her journey as a Ph.D. researcher at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. During this period, she has taken multiple breaks from the program before finally completing this research journey with her dissertation titled: Sunny Days Ahead-Messages during a pandemic: Creative strategies and Themes in health and wellness PSAs by the Ad Council. She has graduated with a doctoral degree from the College of Communication and Information in Dec 2021. Her research interests are branding, advertising and creative strategies, children in ads, consumer culture, public health, and retail marketing.