

Marketing Message Analysis: *Merch on Market*

1. Describe the audience that this communication is designed for (use segmentation and audience analysis data to support)

Although we want to communicate with as many people as possible, the locals of the Selinsgrove community and current students of Susquehanna University are who the communication is designed for. The age demographic of Selinsgrove is dominated by males and females between 18-24 years old and those 65-75+ years old (Selinsgrove PA, 2018). There is an average household income of about \$47,500, and English is the most well-known and spoken language (Selinsgrove PA, 2018). About 88.1% of the Selinsgrove population is White and about 78.1% of Susquehanna University is White (College Factual, 2019). Both of these audiences shop at Target and Walmart and frequent Weis (Selinsgrove PA, 2018). We were also able to gather 109 survey responses from individuals in Selinsgrove. From this data we received responses that led us to better understand the desire of the local Borough to reflect the structure of Lewisburg and Bucknell University, with the University having a vested interest in the economic well being of the town. This looks like Bucknell having a storefront property in the downtown area.

2. Describe the vehicles/format used to deliver or circulate this message (poster). What is the affordance or constraints of this format/vehicle?

Communicating our ideas through traditional advertising such as a poster/flyer is the most effective way to reach the older demographic of the Selinsgrove area. Throughout our interviews with older individuals of the Selinsgrove community, when we asked how they prefer to receive their information the most common answer was physical printed pieces. This is what led us to develop a poster. There are many affordances of posters and one of them is that they are able to reach a wide audience if placed in a location with heavy foot traffic (Wroblewski, 2018). So, in addition to placing the poster on Market Street, which currently does not have an overwhelming amount of foot traffic, they will be placed in places this audience frequents such as churches, Weis, and Walmart. Additionally, posters are a considerably inexpensive form of advertising compared to buying an ad in the newspaper or magazine (Wroblewski, 2018). Some of the constraints of posters are that they are not as interactive as other forms of advertising and that could lessen the impact that they have on the audience they reach (Wroblewski, 2018). In

addition, flyers can be easily misplaced or thrown out when distributed and they cannot incorporate the appeal of sound such as music or video since it is a printed piece (Wroblewski, 2018).

To circulate the message to the students on Susquehanna's, posters/flyers will not be effective for this target audience. Instead, we aim to communicate via social media that Susquehanna currently utilizes. We will post the supplemental piece that replicates the same color scheme, aesthetic, and message as the posters/flyers and post it on Instagram and Facebook. According to a nationwide survey of college students performed by UCLA, 98% of students use social media and 27.2% of them spend more than six hours on social media platforms every week (Griffin, 2016). These statistics support why we are choosing this communication channel to reach the college student population. The affordances of social media is that they reach a larger audience than print advertisements. By posting on social media you are also able to target your audience depending on the account you post on and utilizing any special hashtags. One of the biggest constraints is that there could be negative backlash from customers that is posted for everyone to see (Mott, 2018).

3. Narrative Framing: What is the “big story” behind this message? How have you used shared values to communicate with your audience?

Constitutive rhetoric falls within narrative framing and this constitutes us as characters in a story with a specific role to play and action to perform. We used the methodology of being a family member and transferring this relationship and familial values to the local community. We want the audience to take the action of welcoming others, building a bond, and strengthening the connectedness and communication that a family needs. This also refers to the values of openness, honesty, and transparency. The new storefront is that common ground where members of the family who may live apart from each other can come together and support each other, either by supporting each other financially, or hopefully, by building relationships that are more like the family relationships they desire. By targeting family values, as well as other town values like unity, and hospitality, using language that communicates this, and by calling the community to action to build these things with the community, we have created a narrative with a call to action based on what the town desires to see in it.

4. What evidence led you to design this message in this way? (Interview insight, competitive analysis, auditing of existing message?)

Through interviews, we learned that the older demographic of Selinsgrove prefers to communicate through traditional print advertisements. Several interviewees referred to the printed academic calendar that is delivered to them in the beginning of the school year as being more beneficial than anything digital. Through our interviews we also gathered data that the Selinsgrove community members feel like Susquehanna is isolated from the community. This is what led us to design our message in a welcoming, familial, collaborative way.

We also learned that the way this audience makes decisions is based on financial abilities, meaning that they want things cheap. This audience also favors efficient and convenient means of communication, meaning that they do not want to have to go far to get what they want. This is why posters and flyers will be placed right in front of their eyes in locations that they already frequent, so that they do not need to log on to any websites. Lastly, any existing messages in town are largely spread through print advertisements, according to data collected through our interviews, and that ultimately leads to word of mouth where community members expose each other to new stores, events, or news. This is exactly what we want to replicate to target Selinsgrove community members, in addition to the effective social media posts Susquehanna currently creates to reach college students.

5. Describe the content of the message including any items of importance

Our poster/flyer will be utilized in churches, local businesses, and other common spaces that our community members frequent. The content of this poster includes calming, relaxing images and colors in order to emphasize a sense of positive community values. The colors are symbolic of the potential stakeholders in the downtown property: blue for the Selinsgrove seals and maroon for Susquehanna University. The addition of yellow provides a positive mediating tone that compliments the maroon and blue. The poster provides enough information to let those who read it become aware of what is happening and intrigued by the familiarity of the downtown images. It provides a broad date of when it will be taking place, and uses language that matches the enticing imagery. The background images are taken on Market Street in downtown Selinsgrove. These photos capture different demographics which our property will entice: the older generation, families, and students. Anyone who has been in the area will recognize the

photos, and anyone who hasn't would be enticed by the "hometown" vibe that is expressed through the photos. The logo and message are clear and concise; as well as easy to read and informational to the customers.

Our second, smaller media piece will be a supplement to our main poster. The supplement shows similar features by using the same color scheme and concepts, but only highlights the store-front. It is simple, yet effective because it provides a link to an additional source to further explain the new property. This striking slogan will ignite interest and generate the student's curiosity into how they can support local schools and the university. 98% of college students utilize social media to receive their information, so this supplemental piece will be primarily to target them (Huffpost, 2016).

6. What are the allusions/feelings/emotions that you are trying to evoke from the message?

Why is this important?

For this project, we want to make sure that we make a strong emotional appeal to the people of Selinsgrove and current Susquehanna Students. The residents of the town are very prideful, and they love their town. So, we want to show that we are strengthening that pride. We want to create a united community to show that the university itself and the students who attend, genuinely care about the town financially and emotionally. This is very important because according to our interview data, locals have a perception that Susquehanna does not do a lot for the town and that the college isolates itself. When they find out what the University actually contributes to Selinsgrove, the community members are shocked because things like the annual gift Susquehanna gives or the clean sweep students do every Sunday was never communicated to them. So, if the town sees that the University is trying to promote the downtown area, they will start to feel as if the whole town is unified. This can make the locals prideful of the university, in addition to strictly just their town, rather than being intimidated by it.

7. In seeing this message, what is the action you want your audience to take or role you want your audience to take on?

When the audience sees our message, we want them to come to Merch on Market and support both the local community and Susquehanna University. If they do not want to purchase any Seals or River Hawk apparel or merchandise, we would want the audience to at least come to the store and utilize the lounge area to interact and collaborate with others in the same safe space. We believe that this collaboration is just as important as making a financial contribution to strengthen the relationship between the community and university. We also want our audience to gain exposure of the other local businesses on Market St. by coming to Merch on Market. Our goal is to increase the food traffic on Market Street and tighten the bond between Susquehanna and the community of Selinsgrove.

References

College Factual (2019). *How Diverse is Susquehanna University?*. Retrieved December 5, 2019 from <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/susquehanna-university/student-life/diversity/>

Griffin, R. (2016). *Social Media Is Changing How College Students Deal With Mental Health*. Retrieved December 15, 2019 from <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-media-college-mental-health>

Mott, A. (2018). *Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing*. Retrieved December 15, 2019 from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-disadvantages-social-media-marketing-21890.html>

Selinsgrove, PA (2018). *Data USA*. Retrieved December 5, 2019 from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/16000US4269216>

Wroblewski, M. (2018). *The Advantages of Posters*. Retrieved December 15, 2019 from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-posters-63269.html>