

The Advertising of Artificial Tanning in the HRM

MICHAEL STEVENS
FACULTY OF MEDICINE
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
CLASS OF 2012



Purpose

1. To determine what messages were being promoted by the tanning industry in HRM.
2. To determine if the messages were targeting a particular demographic.

Methodology

- Seventy five tanning salons were identified through the online yellow pages directory within the Halifax Regional Municipality.
- Three main types of advertising were examined:
 - (1) signage or posters inside the main lobby or outside of tanning establishments;
 - (2) websites of tanning establishments and the links from those websites to other tanning related material; and
 - (3) local radio advertising.

Message #1: Having a Tan is Healthy.

- Several health clubs advertised tanning as part of a healthy lifestyle.
 - Catch phrases included:
 - “[Business information removed] is proud to offer the convenience of tanning right within many of our clubs. After enjoying a great workout why not enjoy a relaxing tanning session. Be active, feel good and look good.”
 - Images depicted young people with a “healthy glow”.

THE FACTS: Having a Tan is **not** Healthy

“Tanned skin is damaged skin.” If there is enough UV exposure to change the colour of your skin and give you a tan, then there is also enough UV exposure to damage your DNA which increases your risk of skin cancer and premature aging.

“There is no safe way to get a tan.”

(Canadian Cancer Society, 2010)

Message #2: Base tan provides protection from the sun

- Several tanning salons had exterior signs promoting the idea that “base tans” are important for sun protection before traveling to a sunny destination.
 - Tag lines included:
 - ✦ *Get your base tan before vacation!*
 - ✦ *Tan here first before going south!*

THE FACTS: Tanning bed use does **not** provide protection from the sun

- At most, a tan is the equivalent to a sunscreen with SPF of just 2-4, which is not enough to keep you safe in the sun (Canadian Dermatology Association, 2010).
- The International Agency for Research on Cancer (2006) found no evidence to support a protective effect of the use of tanning beds against damage to the skin by subsequent sun exposure.

Message #3: Indoor tanning is a good way to increase Vitamin D production.

- Several tanning salons had exterior signs and/or messages on their websites that implied tanning was a good way to get Vitamin D.
 - Catch phrases included:
 - ✦ *Winter's here. Boost your Vitamin D!*
 - ✦ *Indoor tanners have been scientifically shown to have 90% higher vitamin D levels than non-tanners.*
 - ✦ *Vitamin D. The way nature intended it.*
 - ✦ *You get more Vitamin D by getting a tan in a non-burning fashion than you would drinking 100 glasses of whole milk.*

THE FACTS: Indoor tanning is **not** a good way to increase Vitamin D production.

- According to the Canadian Cancer Society tanning beds are not a safe way to get vitamin D.
- There are effective and much safer ways to obtain vitamin D through diet and the use of supplements, neither of which will increase risk of skin cancer. (Canadian Cancer Society, 2010)
- Tanning salons are giving users between six and seven times more radiation than is needed for vitamin D production (Cancer Care Nova Scotia, 2007)

Message #4: Melanoma rates are declining

- One chain of tanning salons claimed that melanoma rates in Canada were declining and that the greatest decline was in the demographic group that most utilize tanning beds
 - Catch phrases included:
 - × “Melanoma rates on the decline.”
 - × “Rates of melanoma in our target demographic, females aged 20-44, have been on a steady decline since 1980.”

THE FACTS: Melanoma rates are **not** declining in Canada

- Skin cancer rates have been increasing steadily in Canada over the past 30 years (Health Canada, 2006).
- Melanoma, has become the third most common form of cancer in young Canadian women (aged 15-34) (Canadian Dermatology Association, 2009).
- Nova Scotia has the highest incidence rates of melanoma in the country for females and the second highest for males (Canadian Cancer Statistics 2009, 2010 .)
- 1 in 6 Canadians born in the 1990's will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Compared to a 1 in 20 lifetime risk for those born in the 1960's (Canadian Dermatology Association, 2010).

Message #5: Tanning does not cause cancer.

- Several tanning salons had signs and/or messages on their websites that implied tanning is not linked to cancer.
 - Claims:
 - × “Melanoma Myth: The dermatology lobby consistently overstates the role UV light may play in melanoma and ignores conflicting data.”
 - × “There is no evidence that suntan parlours have induced a single melanoma”

THE FACTS: Tanning in moderation does cause cancer.

- The use of tanning beds increases the risk of developing melanoma especially if exposure begins in adolescence or young adulthood (Canadian Dermatology Association, 2009).
- In 2009, the World Health Organization published evidence based on research conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer that artificial tanning is carcinogenic to humans (El Ghissassia et al., 2009).
- In 2010, a study published in the American Association for Cancer Research Journal provided further evidence that tanning beds are carcinogenic to humans (Lazovich et al., 2010).

The Target Demographic

- **Young women!**
 - Facebook ads targeted at young women
 - “Teen Tan Plan” Brochures
 - × Depicts teenage girls and mothers entering tanning salon together
 - × “16 and under? A parent must come with you during each tanning session. They must sign the attached form showing they are cool with you tanning.”
 - × “16-17? GOOD NEWS! A parent has to come to [Business information removed] once to sign the attached form. After that it’s just you and [Business information removed] pursuing your tan the right way.”

The Target Demographic



Radio Advertisement #1:

{V1: paris hilton type, famous, diva, ditzy talk}

- *V1: Tanning lotion? Like only 20 dollars! Minute packages? Duh, like half price!*
- *Seeing that look on my ex's face when he like spots my deep, dark and like super sexy [Business information removed] tan? Cha, totally priceless!*
- *ANNCR: Get the base tan you need before heading down south. Buy any bottle of lotion and get your minute package for half price! Call [Business information removed].*

Summary of Findings



- The study identified five key messages being advertised by the artificial tanning industry in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM):
- All five messages were shown to be false or misleading
 1. Having a tan is healthy
 2. A base tan provides protection from the sun
 3. Indoor tanning is a good way to increase Vitamin D production.
 4. Melanoma rates are declining in Canada
 5. Tanning in moderation does not cause cancer

Existing Artificial Tanning Regulations



- Health Canada developed guidelines for tanning salon owners, operators and users (Health Canada, 2005).
 - Recommends that no one under the age of 16 use a tanning bed.

Compliance with the guidelines is voluntary!

- **No federal or provincial regulation of the retail tanning industry currently exists!**

Summary of Findings



- Many tanning establishments in the HRM promoted advertising that focused on young females and in some cases teenagers under the age of 18.
- A disconnect exists between a large component of public opinion that regards a tan as healthy, and evidence-based medicine that has clearly shown that it is not.
- This disconnect, is being perpetuated by misleading advertising by tanning businesses in the HRM.
- **It is clear that the artificial tanning industry in the Halifax Regional Municipality is not capable of regulating itself.**

Recommendations



- Government in Nova Scotia should follow the recommendations of the....
 - **World Health Organization**
 - **Canadian Cancer Society**
 - **Canadian Dermatology Association**
 - **Doctors Nova Scotia**
-and enact legislation that prohibits artificial tanning for minors in the province.

Thank You!



MICHAEL STEVENS
FACULTY OF MEDICINE
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
CLASS OF 2012