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## Necromarketing as Advertising Strategy in American Television

### Introduction

“The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else: it is the mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying it in some way that is the final destiny for man” (Becker 1973: ix). There is much about death to fear: whether by accident, disease, or intentional infliction by another human, the path to death for most is accompanied by pain. Thus, death is the ultimate form of fear, and most human action is taken to ignore the inevitability of death (Becker 1973). It has long been recognized that emotional appeals are a great motivator for the human race. Companies looking to stand out from the competition and effectively promote their products and services to consumers seek to find new methods to evoke emotions in consumers. Since 2009, there has been a definite increase in the number of advertisements and public service announcements featuring death, tragedies, and illnesses ultimately positing a product or service to prolong or avoid death (Wojciechowski 2010). In addition, autopsy violence is the most prevalent form of violence shown in American prime-time television programming (Shelton 2007).

Necromarketing (the marketing of death) is a construct of marketing which uses various established persuasive communication methods, but features situations and objects explicitly or implicated connected to death or parasites on death or tragedy in order to elicit an emotional attachment to the product, service, or cause being propagated (Wojciechowski, Shelton 2014). While many studies have explored the impact fear appeals have on consumers, few studies have explored directly into the topic of necromarketing. The goal of this study was to describe the forms, content and functioning of necromarketing in American television advertising.

### Fear, Death and Society

There are a number of fears that are attributed to the idea of death, and researchers have suggested that the fear of death is actually a multi-dimensional concept. Hoelter and Hoelter (1978) distinguish eight dimensions of the death fear: 1) fear of the dying process, 2) fear of premature death, 3) fear for significant others,

4) phobic fear of death, 5) fear of being destroyed, 6) fear of the body after death, 7) fear of the unknown, and 8) fear of the dead. Similarly, Florian and Mikulincer (1993) suggest three components for the fear of death: 1) intrapersonal components related to the impact of death on the mind and body, which include fears of loss of fulfillment of personal goals and fear of the body's annihilation, 2) an interpersonal component that is related to the effect of death on inter-personal relationships, and 3) a transpersonal component that concerns fears about the transcendental self, composed of fears about the hereafter and punishment after death. Due to the complexity of the fear of death, some authors suggest using the term "death anxiety" to describe the amorphous set of feelings that thinking about death can arouse (Schultz 1979). The complexity around death, and the number of fears it produces have scholars debating that such fears are natural or whether they are social constructs. Historically speaking, the most common view is that the fear of death is innate, that all of life tends to avoid death, and that the underlying terror of death is what drives most of the human endeavor (Moore, Williamson 2003). Given all the attempts of biological organisms to preserve life, the general conclusion is that fear of death is a natural and universal response to death (Moore, Williamson 2003).

Human emotion of fear evolved as a mechanism to protect humans from life-threatening situations. As such, for human kind, nothing is more important than survival and that is reflected in the evolutionary primacy of the brain's reasoning faculties. The brain structure that processes perceptions and thoughts and tags them with "fear" is the amygdala. Located near the brain's center, this almond-shaped bundle of neurons evolved long before the neocortex, the seat of conscious awareness. Fear evolved because it promotes survival by triggering an individual to respond instantly to a threat. Thus, the emotions elicited by the dual process of necromarketing motivate consumers to behave in ways that are ultimately in their self interest and the interest of those within our sphere of care or concern (Begley 2007). The emotions of fear lead us to protect our family and ourselves. Overall, the evolutionary primacy of the brain's fear circuitry makes it more powerful than the brain's reasoning faculties. Consequently, fear can be easily sparked in such a way that is irrational and not subject to reason (Maren 2008). Furthermore, the relationship between a brand and a person actually improves during a scary experience. When people feel scared, they look for affiliation and attachment and brands provide that link (Dunn, Hoegg 2014). While studies also reveal that participants who saw advertisements with morality reminders had more negative attitudes towards the advertisements, they had increased purchase intent of the product advertised (Das, Duiven, Arendsen, Vermeulen 2014). These finding aligns with Dar-Nimrod's (2012) findings that when consumers are faced with the inevitability of their own death, they experience a fear, mostly unconscious fear, that they suppress by pursuing wealth and buying products to reinforce a materialistic worldview (Das, Duiven, Arendsen, Vermeulen 2014). Similar to this finding, Cooper, Goldenberg and Arndt (2014) found that those who were primed with messages specifically using death as a fear appeal reported that they were more likely to change their behavior than those who were exposed to messages with a general fear appeal, but not suggesting death. Therefore, there is an established body of research supporting the use

of mortality reminders in fear appeals, as there is a significant increase in intended behavioral change and purchasing habits.

Fear has further effects on consumers than just encouraging materialism. Dunn and Hoegg (2014) found that fear appeals have the ability to facilitate emotional brand attachment. When consumers view fearful advertisements, they seek out affiliation with others to help cope through the uncomfortable experience, and in the case of advertisements, viewers seek affiliation with brands (Dunn, Hoegg 2014). This finding suggests that consumers could become emotionally attached to products that are advertised to them in a fearful way. Therefore, the myriad of marketing communications efforts in an array of product categories (political candidates, health care, non-profit, consumer products) is strategically produced to play on these human fears. With this strategy, communicators are creating a perpetuate state of fear in consumers to keep them submissive to advertising messages (Becker 1974: 14).

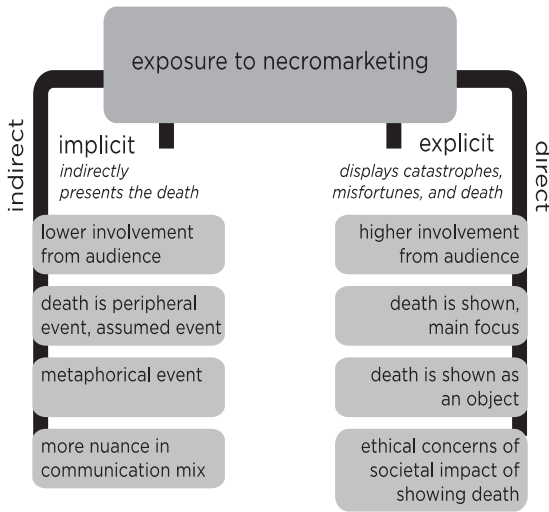
## **Necromarketing**

Necromarketing is a viable marketing construct, as death depictions are used paradoxically as death scares and attract people at the same time (Walter, Littlewood, Pickering 1995). Wojciechowski and Shelton (2014) defined necromarketing as a dual process construct involving two routes of persuasion, similar to both the Heuristic-Systematic Model of Information Processing (HSM) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). As with the HSM and ELM models, which examine heuristic and systematics processing and central peripheral route processing respectively.

Necromarketing discusses explicit and implicit processing (Scheme 1). Where necromarketing differs from both ELM and HSM is the level of processing. With both of these established models, the argument (or persuasive message) is evaluated, and a determination must be made if the argument is strong or weak in order to classify the method into the appropriate process. Necromarketing affects consumers on a more basic level, causing a block on conscious and rational thinking when evaluating brands, because nothing is more uncomfortable than fear, and mankind has many items to fear: fear of pain, disease, injury, and failure to be remembered when we die, to name a few (Wojciechowski, Shelton 2014).

Regardless of the level of processing (explicit or implicit) used in necromarketing, the idea of death causes fear. "Fear of death is one of the inclinations people have that lead them towards death defying behavior" and most of human inclinations people have that lead them towards death defying behavior do not stem from calculations (Becker 1973: 11).

Explicit necromarketing deals with displaying catastrophes, misfortunes and deaths in their pure, direct form. A direct death reference or display includes the depiction of corpses, autopsy, death, illness, or bad luck and undertaking service. This direct form of necromarketing is in fact a main necromarketing presupposition (Solewski 2014). The explicit form of necromarketing is a valued and heavily used method in marketing communications because of the inevitability of death for



**Scheme 1:** Implicit and explicit exposure to necromarketing. Source: own processing, 2016

mankind. Perhaps it is for this reason alone, that the idea of death fascinates the human race. Explicit necromarketing creates an immediate connection between the brand and the consumer, in part because emotions dictate that connection. Feelings lead to emotions and emotions connect people; tragedy touches people, creating greater sensitivity at that moment. Thus, the explicit form of necromarketing has a profound effect on the human conscious.

The primitive nature of fear means that it can be triggered most powerfully not by wordy arguments but by images of death that make a beeline for the brain's emotion regions. Words that evoke images of death rather than abstractions are powerful triggers of fear too. When consumers are reminded of the inevitability of death even by something as seemingly innocuous as passing a funeral procession, people "go to ground" psychologically (Begley 2007). That is, they become more committed to and identify more strongly with something that will endure long after they are gone. When consumers are confronted explicitly of their own inevitable death, they express greater support for the products that confronted death other than those that did not bring up morality (Begley 2007).

Explicit processing often uses direct fear appeals. Fear appeals are composed of three main concepts: fear, threat, and perceived efficacy. "Fear is an emotion that is usually accompanied by heightened physiological arousal. Threat is an external stimulus that creates a perception in message receivers that they are susceptible to some negative situation or outcome. And, perceived efficacy is a person's belief that message recommendations can be implemented and will effectively reduce the threat depicted in the message" (Gore, Madhavan, Curry, McClurg 1998: 36). Explicit forms of necromarketing are effective because they contain direct portrayal of death as well as high levels of threat and efficacy. That is, the message contains a meaningful threat or important problem as well as the specific directed actions that an individual can take to reduce the threat or problem (Witte, Allen 2000).

Implicit necromarketing, on the other hand, is the indirect presentation of death, working with symbols and pictures relating to death. The indirect presentation, however, does not limit the impact on the consumer. The implicit route works by attaching to already present human fears and insecurities about the inevitability of death. Working on the subconscious, the implicit route of necromarketing could be thought of as a “softer” sell than the explicit route, but no less effective. Greenberg, Koole and Pyszczynski (2004) found subliminal reminders of death were effective in branding. An example of indirect fear appeals could be on the advertisements that focus on motivating people to help others in danger.

While fear is a motivator for people, fear resides, however, in the individual, rather than in message content (Danzin 1984). “Fear arousal is less important in motivating precautionary action than perceptions of action effectiveness and self-efficacy. Moreover, perceived personal relevance may be critical to the emotional and cognitive impact of threat information” (Ruiter, Abraham, Kok 2001: 613). The precautionary information or reassurance in the message rather than the overt images of death to arouse fear is likely to have the greatest impact on behavior, especially given the fact that fear may inhibit the establishment of precautionary motivation through the instigation of fear control processes. Thus, the implicit route of necromarketing is showing death with a degree of finesse. Studies have shown that the use of fear is most effective “when used as a scalpel rather than a cudgel” by stoking audiences anxieties instead of inflaming them (Begley 2007: 4). Implicit necromarketing also serves up death by showing symbols identified with death, such as a skeleton, gravestone, or a coffin.

## Theoretical Underpinnings

Overall fear appeals are used heavily in necromarketing, either through the explicit or implicit route. Fear often evokes the fight or flight response, and more often than not a human’s first reaction is to flee back to a comfort zone. When we don’t know the way back to this comfort zone, we are likely to follow whoever shows us a path. This is why, in part, marketers use fear as often as they can. They present a scenario they hope will evoke a sense of fear, and then they provide a solution—a path back to a comfort zone—that entails using specific products or services. Therefore, messages concerning death are salient to consumers, and can precipitate forms of materialism (Urien, Kilbourne 2008).

Modern western society is characterized as death defying (Barry, Yuill 2012). Therefore, the concept of death defying implies that modern society silences any discussion of death, forbids the topic of death or dying in everyday conversation. Thus, when messages are disseminated concerning the topic of death, people are confronted with cognitive dissonance, and seek consistency in their beliefs and attitudes in the situation. The use of fear appeals inherent in necromarketing is built from foundation of various communication, marketing and psychological theories, providing a reason why usage is so widespread. Most notably, the Terror Management Theory (TMT) and the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) underscore death-marketing efforts.

Terror Management Theory (TMT) shows that humans are instinctively programmed to self-preserve, and they have the cognitive capacity to be self-aware. With the awareness of self and non-self, humans are able to be aware of death. TMT posits that this understanding of death combined with the instinctive drive for self-preservation engenders a vast potential for terror. The resulting terror from realizing our own morality is paralyzing. To quell the terror that comes from death, humans invest in cultural belief systems (or worldviews) that imbue life with meaning. Therefore, advertising efforts depict common views as a strategy to engage consumers with a brand in order to provide meaning to individual lives, "Regarding materialism as an adaptive behavior, Arndt et al. (2004) concluded that, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans started buying more houses, cars, electrical appliances, furniture, etc. This resulted in an increase in annual consumer spending of 6% between October and December of 2001" (Urieu, Kilbourne 2008: 410). After the World Trade Center tragedy, "Americans had to come to terms with death saliency that was subtly present in the fringes of their consciousness. To do this, they needed to increase their social standing within their own culture by behaving in agreement with cultural values such as materialism" (Urieu, Kilbourne 2008: 410).

Another theory, the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) proposes that mankind protects themselves based on four factors: the perceived severity of a threatening event, the perceived probability of the occurrence, or vulnerability, the efficacy of the recommended preventive behavior, and the perceived self-efficacy (Rogers 1983). Protection motivation stems from both the threat appraisal and the coping appraisal. The threat appraisal assesses the severity of the situation and examines how serious the situation is. The coping appraisal is how one responds to the situation. This strategy is employed in advertising efforts by providing an answer to the situation at hand. While there are many goals of marketing efforts, the ultimate goal of any marketing effort is to increase desired behavior and to "own" the market (McKenna 1990). Therefore, consumerism is on the minds of marketers during all efforts.

Based on earlier findings regarding fear appeals in advertisements, the current study investigated advertisements (paid space) in American television, and investigated the following hypothesis:

H1: Implicit necromarketing is more commonly used in American television advertisements than explicit necromarketing.

This hypothesis is based on Greenburg (2004) research into subliminal advertising and predicts that reminders of death are considered effective by brands, and incorporated into adverts in American television.

H2: Advertisements for insurance companies will feature necromarketing appeals more so than other industries in American television.

Insurance is a means of protection from financial loss, and is primarily used to hedge against the risk of a contingent or uncertain loss. Uncertainty causes fear, thus the nature of the insurance industry proposals that mankind protects itself, which aligns clearly with the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT).

H3: Advertisements promoting upcoming film and television series on American television will use necromarketing appeals more often than consumer product categories.

Following the Terror Management Theory (TMT), advertisements for future television programming and newscasts will illuminate the anxieties that lie below the surface of Americans' collective cultural norms.

Specifically, this study serves to observe and answer the following research questions:

Q1: What forms of necromarketing appeals are found in advertisements in American television?

Q2: Which type of necromarketing is used more in advertisements?

Q3: What industries use necromarketing the most?

Q4: Who do advertisers target with necromarketing?

## Methodology

This study takes a quantitative approach to measuring necromarketing efforts in American primetime television programming. The method of content analysis was determined prudent as it allows researcher to collect a wide variety of data throughout any range of time, and is non-intrusive (Macnamara 2006). Therefore researchers were able to examine a large sample of shows for multiple periods of time. Further support for the method of content analysis stems from the Cognitive Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1986), which states that mass media (in particular television) has the power to reflect behavior and social attitudes that viewers observe, retain, and learn from (e.g. about issue in video games see more Mago 2016). Thus, the Cognitive Social Learning Theory underpins any discussion about the impact the television content, including advertising, has on society.

- The design of the research has as its underpinnings the idea of message system analysis, as introduced by George Gerbner. Message system analysis, as defined for this study, comes from Gerbner's *Violence Profile* (Gerbner 1980). Gerbner's approach was content analyses. For his studies, Gerbner created specific definitions of violence to determine whether an act was counted. To accurately code necromarketing, categories were created that mirror the dual process construct involving two routes of persuasion: explicit and implicit. This study was carried out on convenience sample of American television advertisements. Implicit necromarketing was coded when researchers saw indirect presentation of death, specifically regarding symbols and pictures referring to death. Examples of implicit necromarketing would be a cemetery, coffin, or angel; whereas explicit necromarketing displayed catastrophes, misfortunes and deaths in their pure, direct form. A direct death reference or display includes the depiction of corpses, autopsy, or death. Other coded variables included: the network, the time the show aired, and product category of the advertisement.



- Regarding network, four broadcast networks were determined to be prudent to investigate (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox). These four represent the largest broadcast television networks in the United States. While ABC, CBS and NBC traditionally are considered the Big Three (due to ratings, time on the air, programming hours), Fox has just about the same household reach percentage as the Big Three, and is therefore often considered a peer to ABC, NBC, and CBS since it has also achieved equal or better ratings since the late 1990s. Most media outlets now include Fox in what they refer to as the Big Four television networks. Times varied across day-parts, and chose using a convenience sampling method.
- The product category was determined by investing the top product categories by spending in the United States. This list is populated quarterly by the highest levels of ad spending in various media. The top product categories across multiple quarters (with equal variance assumed) were as follows:
  - Food (fast food, grocery stores, etc.)
  - Baby/Children
  - Department Stores
  - Drinks
  - Technology
  - Pharmaceutical
  - Insurance
  - Automobiles
  - Motion Pictures
  - Network Promos
  - Beauty
  - Other

In addition, coders noted the mode of persuasion used in the advertisement. These modes of persuasion (often referred to as rhetorical strategies or rhetorical appeals) are used to classify the speaker's appeal to the audience. To this end, logos (appeals to reason), ethos (appeals to consumer's character) and pathos (using emotion) were coded for each advertisement that used necromarketing as a strategy in the message.

The unit of analysis for this study was necromarketing and the vehicle of inspection was television advertisements airing during composite week of November 10 through November 16, 2015. The universe of this study consisted of any advertisement that aired during the television show.

### **Encoder Reliability**

Multiple coders analyzed each advertisement. To increase reliability, these coders were trained in order to accurately understand and code each instance of visual and verbal depictions of civic virtue as defined by the researcher. A pilot test was conducted to establish encoder reliability prior to the start of the study. The range of reliability coefficients ranged from .75 to .97, with the overall reliability score .90 using Cohen's Kappa.

Each coder used a video monitor to view each advertisement and had the coding sheet in front of them. Coders used a remote control to pause the program while marking the coding sheet. In some cases, a DVR was used to record the programming for a specific time slot during the day. Each show resulted in a new coding sheet.



### Findings

After collecting data, and coding it into SPSS, we were able to run simple statistical tests to describe the results. Over all we coded 40 television shows, resulting in 1012 television advertisements for a total of 125 instances of necromarketing.

Advertisements were sampled from a variety of product categories. As researchers first coded each commercial based on product category, and secondarily by type of necromarketing, this study has wide appeal to anyone investigating the product type advertised in American television, by day, time and network. Figure 1 shows the distribution of advertising by product category. Only the seven most populated categories were reported.

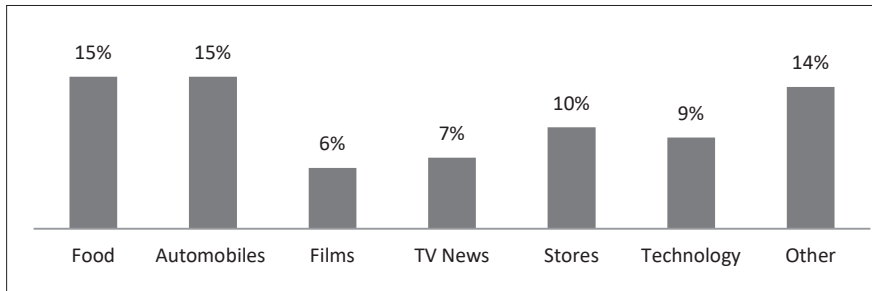


Figure 1. Primary product categories. Source: own research

As shown in Figure 2, both types of necromarketing were found as marketing strategies in American advertising, although implicit necromarketing was used more often (9 percent) as compared to explicit necromarketing (2 percent). Only 1 percent of advertisements (N = 1012) portrayed both implicit and explicit necromarketing.

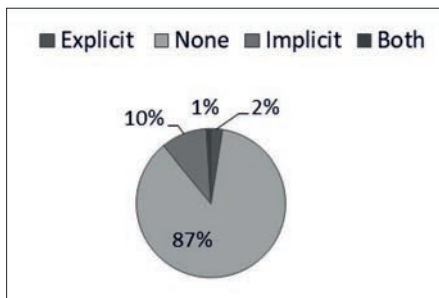


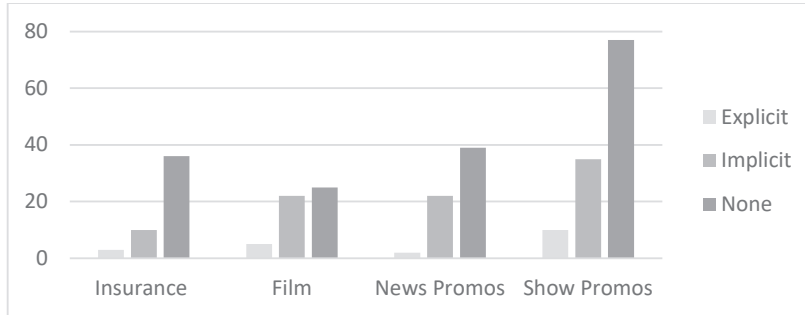
Figure 2. Types of necromarketing. Source: own research

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the product category mean scores to the advertisements that used implicit necromarketing as a strategy and those that did not. There was a statistical significance found (M = 8.47, SD = 3.78; M 6.39, SD = 3.78). While this analysis showed us what was already intuitively known by looking at the frequency breakdown (Figure 1) it allowed researchers to create a new variable by combining the categories of implicit

and explicit necromarketing, enabling us to pinpoint which product categories had the statistical difference by conducting a one-way anova. A new variable was coded, which included the presence of both types of necromarketing.

To investigate if the type of necromarketing used by communicators differed based on product category/industry, we ran non-parametric statistics, specifically in the form of a Chi-Square test of independence. The test (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated a statically significant association between product category and necromarketing,  $X^2(33, n = 1009) = .26, p = .000, \phi = .4$ . The effect size is important to note. Using the Cramer's V, which takes into account degrees of freedom for tables larger than a  $2 \times 2$  (in this case it was a  $4 \times 12$ ), we removed one case from each the row (12-1) and column (5-1). Using the smaller value of three ( $C-1=3$ ), we determined that the effect size was moderate to large (Cramer's V = .26).

After running a cross tabulation of data, the results provided evidence concerning what industry used necromarketing most often in the advertising efforts. Advertisements in the product categories of insurance, films, television network show and news promotions were found to have the greatest number of necromarketing appeals. Out of 281 advertisements in these five categories, there were 98 necromarketing appeals (3 percent). Figure 3 shows the percentages of explicit and implicit found in each product category. However, important to note is that three of the four product categories featured both implicit and explicit appeals in television advertisements.



**Figure 3.** Necromarketing per product category. Source: own research

A one-way between subject analysis of variance was conducted to explore the type of necromarketing used in advertising and the product category, as measured by Nielsen. Subjects were divided into four categories according to the type of necromarketing (Group 1: Explicit, Group 2: None, Group 3: Implicit, Group 4: both). After running the test, statistical differences were found at the  $p < .05$  level in necromarketing scores for the four categories  $F = (10.1, p = .000)$  showing that the advertisements in the product category of insurance ( $M = 5.91, SD = 3.74$ ) and motion pictures ( $M = 8.34, SD = 2.47$ ). While both categories had had instances of necromarketing, they were significantly different in the type of necromarketing used. Implicit necromarketing was found to be the most prevalent in these product categories. Cross tabulations also reveal that the evening hours of

20:00, 20:30, 21:00, 22:00 had the most necromarketing featured. Six percent of all advertisements in these time slots (n = 441) were necromarketing, with 99 percent using implicit necromarketing tactics. Furthermore, the late morning/afternoon time slots of 10:30, 11:00, 11:30, and 2:00 featured more necromarketing than other timeslot in that day part. Five percent of all advertisements coded were found to contain necromarketing appeals (n = 198), with 13 percent of all necromarketing advertisements being implicit. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the total advertisements coded, and the percentage of advertisements found to be necromarketing.

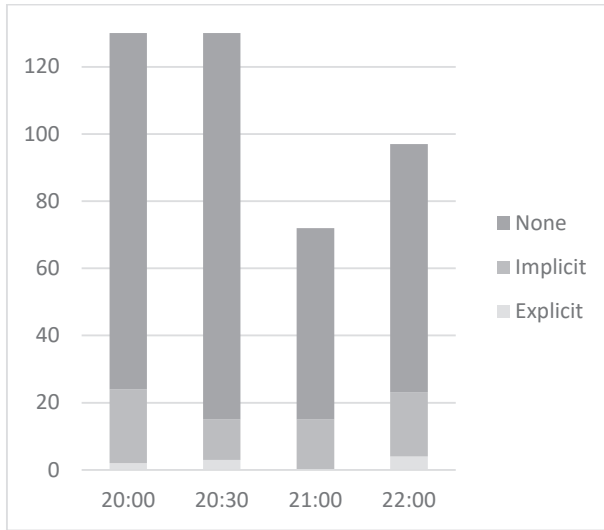


Figure 4. Necromarketing in evening ads. Source: own research

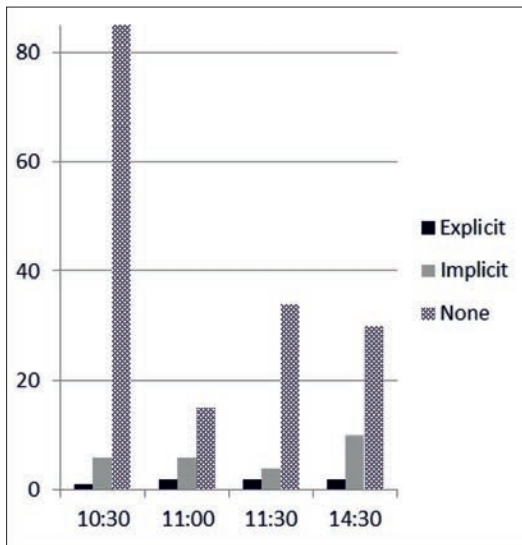


Figure 5. Necromarketing in daytime ads. Source: own research

When investigating which American television network featured necromarketing, we ran cross tabulation, which revealed that while all networks had advertising with necromarketing, NBC had 82 (17 percent) explicit and implicit appeals in advertisements ( $n = 496$ ), 71 percent ( $n = 58$ ) of which were implicit appeals. However, while the ABC network had fewer advertisements coded in this study than other networks, the advertisements collected revealed that 20 percent of all ads ( $n = 135$ ) featured necromarketing. To investigate if the television network differed regarding type of advertisements purchased by marketing departments, we ran a one-way between groups anova. We found a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the networks CBS and NBC ( $F = 3.4$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .016$ ). Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean score between the groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared was .01. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for ABC was ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .65$ ), CBS was ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $DS = .93$ ) and NBC was ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ), and Fox ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ). ABC and Fox did not differ significantly from the other two (Figure 6).

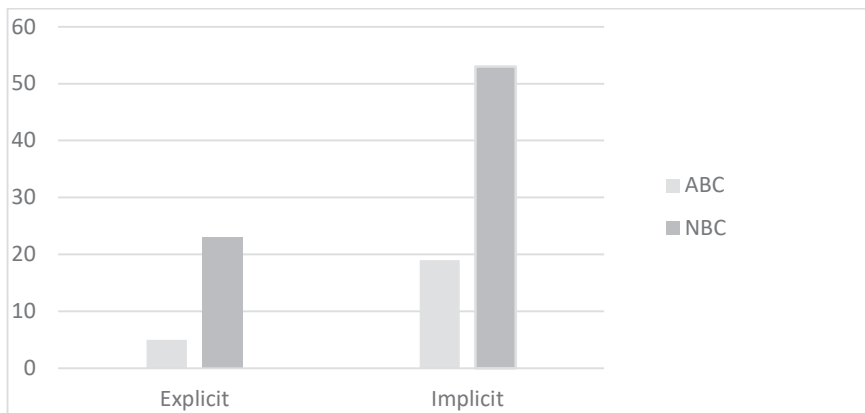


Figure 6. Necromarketing by top network. Source: own research

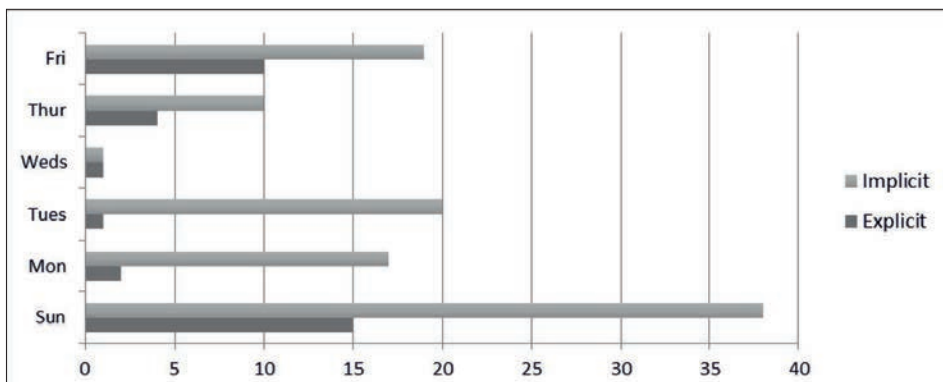


Figure 7. Necromarketing per day. Source: own research

In order to determine whom advertisers target with necromarketing, we conducted cross-tabulations to reveal which day of the week advertisers use necromarketing appeals. We found that Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays had a significantly higher amount of necromarketing appeals than Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays (Figure 7).

## Discussion

The proliferation of death in a myriad of marketing efforts can be attributed in some part to the proliferation of media channels and information sources, and due to modern death defying attitudes. To get consumers attention, advertising must be shocking and provoking. In fact, attention is so necessary in effective advertising, and the market is so competitive that attention is now often regarded as currency (Teixeira 2014).

While previous studies have investigated fear appeals and their effect on consumers, very little research has been done on how advertisers market death. While only 13 percent of advertisements were considered necromarketing, we still were able to show that consumers are exposed to it in American television advertisements. Of the two methods of necromarketing, implicit necromarketing is used most often. This indirect approach means that advertisers tend to prefer to appeal to the subconscious than to use a shock approach.

Advertisements in the product categories of insurance, films, television network show and news promotions were found to have the greatest number of necromarketing appeals. Based on the amount of advertising expenditures by product category, insurance and films fall in the top five according to Kantar Media. Thus, if necromarketing is a strategy in these categories, the viewers have a greater likelihood of being exposed either through the explicit or implicit route. The findings regarding product categories support the prediction that the industries of insurance companies and entertainment promotions will use necromarketing appeals more often than others. However, an interesting finding was that television shows promotions and news/station promotions rated higher than another category. This was an interesting finding, as network promotions of its own content were not considered when investigating advertising expenditures. However, the use of necromarketing to promote primetime shows and newscasts is not surprising considering the amount of violence shown in American television shows (Shelton 2007).

Our assumption was that implicit necromarketing would be a more commonly used marketing tactic than explicit necromarketing was proven to be valid. Further research should explore the effects of necromarketing on consumers, and specifically explicit necromarketing is considered in the creative process in advertising planning. Our assumptions that more necromarketing appeals would be found in primetime television was also found to be valid. While there were a greater number of necromarketing appeals found in primetime, the daytime programmes had nearly 6 percent of all ads having a necromarketing premise. Furthermore, we were able to pinpoint which time slots in primetime had the highest occurrences of necromarketing, which was 20:00–21:00. This finding was important, as one of the goals of

this research project was to determine who is targeted by necromarketing appeals. To make this determination, in addition to the time necromarketing was found in, we investigated which American television network aired more necromarketing advertisements, and what day they aired. Our findings revealed that while all networks had advertising with necromarketing, NBC and ABC advertisements featured necromarketing more often. The days of Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays had a significantly higher amount of necromarketing appeals than Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. These findings, combined with ratings information from Nielsen, show us that necromarketing is widely disseminated, exposing viewers from aged 18–65. The number of death-related advertisements shown on NBC supports this statement, as NBC is the number one network with adults aged 18–49. Furthermore, 6 of the top 15 primetime shows air between 20:00–21:00, and 4 of the top 15 primetime shows air on NBC. Further support comes a Pew research report last year that cited women aged 18–49 are the viewer most sought by advertisers during daytime TV. Thus we can say that necromarketing appeals in advertising are broadly, not narrowly targeted.

Overall these findings indicate that necromarketing is still a developing construct that isn't widely used by advertisers as of yet. Necromarketing should be further explored by future research to help develop the construct so that advertisers are more comfortable using it as a marketing tactic. It would be interesting to see if there is a difference in necromarketing use in traditional media versus new media. This study combined with future research could aid advertisers in new tactics to persuade consumers to buy their products or services, create attachment to their brand and to stand out from competitors.

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### Abstract

Thanks to the analysis of 1012 American TV commercials, we determined the form, contents and functioning of necromarketing in American TV advertising. Our conclusions demonstrate that implicit necromarketing is a more frequently used strategy than explicit necromarketing. In particular, insurance and entertainment sectors, before programmes or news, more often resort to necromarketing on TV in prime-time than other branches during the day.

### Necromarketing jako strategia reklamowa w amerykańskiej telewizji

#### Streszczenie

Dzięki analizie treści 1012 amerykańskich reklam telewizyjnych ustaliliśmy formy, treść i funkcjonowanie nekromarketingu w amerykańskiej reklamie telewizyjnej. Ustalenia pokazują, że niejawni nekromarketing jest częściej stosowaną taktyką marketingową niż jawny nekromarketing w medium. W szczególności branże ubezpieczeń i rozrywki przed programami czy wiadomościami częściej korzystają z odwołań do nekromarketingu w telewizji w prime timie niż inne branże w ciągu dnia.

**Key words:** Necromarketing, Television, Terror, Protection, Death, Media, Rating TV

**Słowa kluczowe:** nekromarketing, telewizja, terror, ochrona, śmierć, media, rating TV

**Amiee J. Shelton** – dr, stypendystka Fulbrighta i doświadczona specjalistka ds. komunikacji. Dzięki ponad dziesięcioletniemu doświadczeniu w telewizji w największych korporacjach medialnych w Stanach Zjednoczonych wnosi silną perspektywę praktyczną do swoich badań i nauczania oraz jest akredytowana w Public Relations Society of America. Często publikuje w interdyscyplinarnych czasopismach recenzowanych. Jej badania koncentrują się na praktycznych rozwiązaniach w obszarze PR, wpływie stresu na sektor usług w europejskich programach PR oraz potrzebie rozszerzenia edukacji PR, jednak jej głównym celem jest rozwój uczniów. W tym celu regularnie przedstawia studentów

na konferencjach naukowych, publikuje artykuły ze studentami w czasopismach recenzowanych oraz podróżuje ze studentami w ramach programów krajowych i zagranicznych. Dr Shelton jest powszechnie doceniana za podejście skoncentrowane na studentach, była wielokrotnie nominowana do nagrody za doskonałe wyniki w nauczaniu na uniwersytecie, otrzymała też Nagrodę Marka Goulda za doskonałe wyniki w nauczaniu. Jest członkiem PRSA, IPRA, CIPR, AEJMC; była radną w dziale nauk humanistycznych Rady ds. Badań Licencyjnych.

**Łukasz P. Wojciechowski** – doc. prof., zajmuje się zagadnieniami nekromarketingu, semiotyki, historii kina i fotografii, marketingu partyzanckiego oraz nowych trendów w komunikacji i marketingu w środkach masowego przekazu. Ma praktyczne doświadczenie w produkcji filmowej jako asystent reżysera i fotograf w projektach międzynarodowych. Ukończył Instytut Komunikacji Literackiej i Artystycznej Uniwersytetu w Nitrze oraz Instytut Fotografii Twórczej Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Opawie. Obecnie jest wykładowcą w Departamencie Komunikacji Medialnej na Wydziale Komunikacji Medialnej Uniwersytetu Świętych Cyryla i Metodego w Trnawie.