Proposal for Incorporating VideoAnt as a Teaching Strategy or Student Learning Activity in Your Course

Richard Brown (brown123@umn.edu)

Overview

Direct to consumer (DTC) ads have become a familiar and powerful means for pharmaceutical companies to promote sales by appealing directly to the consumer. Television advertising is a very persuasive medium and a great deal of research goes into designing and developing ads that use very precise strategies for manipulating viewer attitudes and motivations, and guiding viewers to discuss a given drug with their physician, for example.

Media literacy is a discipline or content area focused on providing students and others with a conceptual framework that promotes a critical eye when viewing video, print, or audio clips of all sorts. Coupled with the conceptual framework defining media literacy, are various rubrics to support the "deconstruction" of ads along various important dimensions. Table 1 provides an example of one such rubric.

Table 1: Common cinematic techniques intended to affect emotions, motivations, and/or behaviors in video advertisements	
Cinematic Technique	**Goal**
Close-up	Intimacy and focus either on actors or on our relationship with actor.
Long shot with pans	Establishing context with the shot providing continuity and a sense of co-presence.
Changing Frame Using Zoom-in or Zoom-out	Visual interest and invitation; drawing in from a general to a specific focus.
Juxtaposing text or other graphic visuals / simulations with close-up or medium close shots	Promoting clarity or emphasis related to key message of the ad.
Music and Background sounds	Strong influence on emotions. Stirring, inspiring, settling, etc.
Clothing	The most powerful means to establish status, and/or setting (e.g., home, work, play) and socio-economic status.
Closing Shot	The finial shot provides the "carry out" message. Is it a directive? A question? Why? What does it intend for you to feel, want, or do?

The University of Minnesota has developed an (freely accessible) on-line tool that allows users to view and annotate videos and, then, share their annotated video with others via a simple URL. Annotations include a title and a brief text description, each created by the person annotating a given video. Each annotation is precisely tagged to a specific point in the video and the set of annotations are aligned in a sort of table of contents along the side of the video. Figure 1 provides a snapshot of an annotated video created by a student. A live version of this annotated video can be watched at - http://ant.umn.edu/vav.php?pid=58583074898835
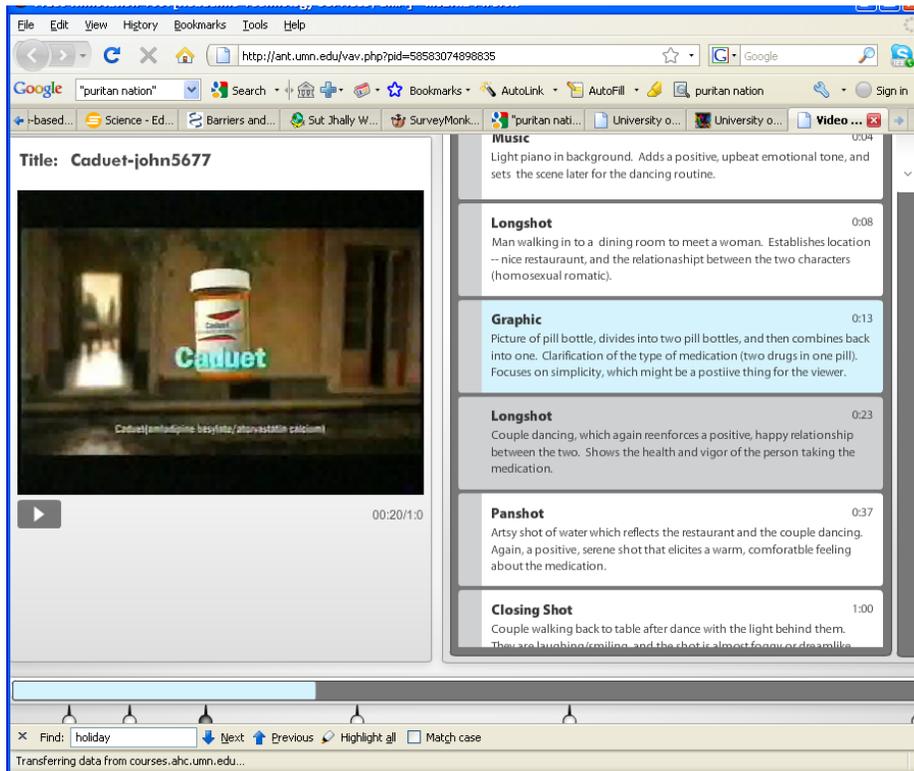
FIGURE 1: Screenshot of Student-Created Annotated Video Using VideoAnt

An instructional module aimed at promoting both information about media literacy and practice applying a rubric for deconstructing a DTC ad using VideoAnt, was piloted recently in *Phar1004 - Common Prescription Drugs and Diseases*. While the number of subjects in this pilot was low (n=4), after concluding the module, three of the four subjects agreed with the statement, "I will definitely look at advertisements differently due to the material I encountered in the Media Literacy module." In addition, three of the four subjects agreed with the statement, "The Media Literacy module is definitely relevant to the discussion of direct to consumer advertising occurring in Phar1004." (The fourth participant replied "Neutral" to both statements, above.)

Request for Collaborators
I am looking to work with course directors or instructors to collaboratively design, develop, and implement a "module," course assignment, or simply an example of an annotated DTC ad (or other type of ad) that includes the use of video annotation, either as a means to demonstrate or teach important course-related concepts (i.e., one or more annotated videos created by the instructor) or as a means to provide students with practice applying various course-related concepts while annotating a video on their own. While my prior pilot work (described above and created/implemented with several collaborators) focused on promoting a critical stance via an introduction to media literacy, that focus does not need to be included in any teaching/learning strategy we design for use within your given course.

While it is possible to simply revise the instructional materials we have pilot tested, for use within your course, I am open to assisting you in developing a completely new and different strategy with different goals in mind. I look forward to hearing from you and, perhaps, sitting down to discuss how a VideoAnt instructional strategy might be incorporated into one or more courses that you are teaching! We can, obviously, walk through a more thorough demonstration of VideoAnt at that time.
brown123@umn.edu