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MCA 264 – PR Research

RQ: Why do people get tattoos?

Intro: On Saturday, March 9, 2013 I visited Addict To Ink Tattoos in White Plains, New York. I was at Addicted to Ink from 3:30pm to 7:30pm. I failed to realize that this was also the same day as the St. Patrick's Day parade in White Plains.

Explanation: While at Addicted to Ink I sat on the cushioned windowsill which was located along the same wall as the entrance to the shop. This allowed me to observe those who came in and who were already in their sessions, as well as have an overall view of what was going on inside of Addicted to Ink. I chose to sit in this area because I knew it would allow me to analyze behaviors from an open area (view of artists and clients, as well as those waiting on the couch). From 5:30pm to 7:30pm I moved to the waiting area, which was slightly to the left and had a television, which was showing "Constantine", as well as view of the many pre-determined designs for clients to choose from. In this area I was able to see how clients who were unsure of what type of tattoo they wanted look at an array of designs to mix and match. As clients were sitting around waiting for their friends, I looked through the designs on the wall, which allowed me to see the type of clientele Addicted to Ink attracts based on their most popular stencils to stencils in various categories. The purpose of my observation was to gain an understanding as to why people take time out of their day to get tattoos.

Themes: Throughout the entire afternoon and early evening a variety of current and potential clients filled the shop. When I first entered the shop there was three men already under the needle, all males in their late 20s to early 30s, and possibly even mid-late 30s. Two men were getting tattoos on their calve muscle, while the other was having a sleeve outlined. All clients

had either a friend (1) with them or an electronic device (2). It seems that they have other tattoos and can tolerate the pain related to the areas being inked.

Another constant theme was walk-in clients. There were seven young adults, four male and three female, that approached the shop. They were all calm and casual, one of them had a parent with them as I had overheard that it was his first tattoo. I actually saw his tattoo created and done from beginning to end, which allowed me to evaluate his reaction from the moment he walked in to when he left. His reaction was also calm, much like the older males getting their tattoos. In regards to the other walk-ins, since Saturday was mostly appointments, these potentials had to take a position on the walk-in list. Each client was content with the list and walked away confidently. These clients were in their early 20s.

Cover-ups happened to be a huge theme throughout my observation. One of the males getting his calve tattooed spoken to his artist about covering a 9/11 tribute piece because it made him depressed. As any artist would say, the tattoo was absolutely beautiful and the fact it saddened him every time he saw it was not a valid reason for any artist at Addicted to cover it up. In relation, the reason this client had gotten the initial piece was to pay tribute to those lost in 9/11; the fact that he wanted to cover it up was to rid of the constant reminder of a tragedy. An older woman came into the shop about two hours after I had been there; she was there with her teenage daughter who was getting a piercing. This mother was in her 30s or 40s, dressed in tighter clothing, and was accompanied by her husband. She expressed to one of the artists that she had a lower back piece she wanted to cover up because she simply didn't like the initial piece. Having mentioned that she had already had one tattoo removed (on her finger), she did not come in prepared to discuss a possible cover-up; only that she wanted to cover the piece she already had.

Being that Addicted to Ink is located in White Plains, there is a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Throughout the four hours I noticed a two African Americans two Hispanics, and one mixed ethnicity, within this group there was only one female, all between ages 22 and 32; There was also a Hispanic couple who came to inquire about setting up an appointment. Out of the group of African Americans only two were interested in actually getting a tattoo (the one female and one mixed male) and only one of them had a tribute tattoo. He was the only client that I heard say that the tattoo he was interested in would be a tribute to a woman who impacted his life. This was not the case for the other clients.

Overall Theme: The overall theme was spontaneous decisions, cover-ups, youth, and male clients.

Conclusion: While at Addicted to Ink Tattoos, there was a common attribute that clients within the surrounding area get tattoos either as a tribute or as a spontaneous decision. There were few female clients, leading the study to believe it is a male dominant area, as well as an activity for the youth with a few exceptions. This observation also leads belief that some clients don't necessarily think about what they are putting on their bodies. Seeing that it was the St. Patrick's Day parade in White Plains, there was not a lot of intoxicated individuals except for one or two that were walk-in clients It seems that Addicted to Ink Tattoos is not only a primary establishment for the occupants of White Plains, but that the artists re extremely honest when going over pieces with clients, allowing them to see the truth behind their visit. Keeping this in mind, individuals who get tattoos, particularly in White Plains, strive for opportunities to express themselves in their art of choice, as well as cover the past with new light.