The (UN)Truth in Marketing

Teens are more connected than ever. In an age of cell phones, tablets, and laptops teens have the Internet and social media at their fingertips. And now, the advertising agencies have teenagers at their fingertips!

There has always been positive tobacco imagery throughout Hollywood; now the same thing is happening with e-cigarettes and vaping. We’re so used to seeing cigarettes portrayed in Hollywood, but recently we have seen many movie stars normalizing vaping, including some of the following examples in TV and movies:

- Kevin Spacey in *House of Cards*
- Johnny Depp in *The Tourist*
- Damian Lewis and Malin Ackerman in *Billions*
- Zac Efron in *Neighbors*

*The Simpsons* even came out with an episode in 2015 which showed Baby Maggie blowing rings of e-vapor. This is called “strategic placement,” which means, basically, that e-cigarette companies encourage these stars to vape on and off screen.

For this exercise, find an image or advertisement of a person (or people) using Juul or other e-cigarette brands.

Then answer the following questions:

1. Who is vaping?
2. What are their surroundings?
3. What is your impression of the e-cig/vape user(s)? Write down five characteristics.
4. If the image is an advertisement, what is the message behind the ad? How are the advertisers trying to sell the product?
5. If the image is not an ad, why do you think the photographer decided to have the character vape? Would the image have been different without vaping? In what way?
6. What aspects of the image do you find appealing? What aspects do you find unappealing? What, if anything, attracts you to the tobacco user?
7. Does the image make you want to vape? Why or why not?
8. If you are an e-cig user, do you think the image accurately shows what it is like to vape? Does the image tell the whole truth?