

Essay 3: Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement

Assignment: We live in a world that is flooded with images, specifically advertising-related images. Every detail of these images is carefully considered and selected to convey specific overt and covert messages with the ultimate goal of influencing how we think and feel. Advertising has grown much more sophisticated over the decades, and it is in our best interest to develop a more sophisticated set of skills for understanding and analyzing these images. When we analyze an image, we break it down to its basic elements in an effort to better understand how those elements convey ideas and messages. For this assignment, you will choose an advertisement and analyze and explain how it works to impact and manipulate—either effectively or ineffectively—the feelings and consciousness of its audience.

Percentage of Grade: 20%

Length: 3 – 4 pages

Genre: Rhetorical Analysis (*HTWA* Chapters 8 and 69)

Purpose: To describe the content of an advertisement as well as all the visual elements that contribute to that content. To rhetorically analyze an advertisement, considering how its elements work together to convey some sort of message beyond the literal message of the ad. To determine how effective or ineffective this message is for its audience.

Audience: The audience is diverse and thoughtful; they prefer reflective analysis to offensive editorials and have not necessarily seen the ad.

Thesis: The purpose of your analysis is to reveal something about the ad you are analyzing to readers that they otherwise probably would not notice or consider. Craft a thesis that specifies the advertisement you chose and how its elements contribute to the effectiveness of its message.

Organization: Begin your analysis with a description of the advertisement, include its medium (print ad, commercial, trailer, etc.) and message. Next, analyze the ad by considering audience (at whom is the ad aimed?), occasion (why was the text created? For example, a certain event such as the Super Bowl), context (does this ad have a history?), and rhetorical appeals (use of ethos, pathos, logos). Altogether, these elements should create an effective argument for the product; sometimes they don't. Conclude your essay with a discussion of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the ad as proven in your analysis.

⇒ Description of the ad
Medium - (trailer, commercial, print, etc.)
message - what's it selling
audience - aimed at whom
occasion - why created (reason, season)

Context - history
rhetorical appeals - ethos, pathos, logic
effective / ineffective

Rhetorical Analysis

- Rhetoric is the art of using language and media to achieve particular goals. A rhetorical analysis is an argument that takes a close look at the strategies of persuasion within a text; it lists and describes specific techniques that a writer, speaker, editor, artist, or advertiser has employed and then assesses their effectiveness.
- You react to what other say or write all the time. Sometimes an advertisement, speech, or maybe a cultural image grabs you so hard that you want to take it apart to see how it works. Put these discoveries into words and you've composed a rhetorical analysis.

Rhetorical Appeals:

- (1) **Ethos**: establish character and **credibility** of the author, the appeal to character. Audiences are usually influenced and swayed by writers or speakers who present themselves as knowledgeable, honest, fair-minded, and believable.
- (2) **Pathos**: generate emotions in order to move audiences, the **emotional appeal**. A text generates strong feelings to support its points, win over readers, or influence them in other ways.
- (3) **Logos**: use evidence and **logic** to make its case, the appeal to reason and evidence. The claims a text offers should be supported by facts, data, testimony, and good reasons.

Rhetorical Analysis Assignment (20%)

- Analysis of an advertisement: write your own critical analysis of a single ad or full ad campaign.

Sample Rhetorical Analysis:

- ✓ "Ad Report Card: Can Cougars See Cough Drops?" (handout)
- ✓ "The Other Car" *HTWA*, pg. 921
- ✓ "Dudes Come Clean: Negotiating a Space for Men in Household Cleaner Commercials" *HTWA*, pg. 933

Bring a magazine advertisement to class

Online Activity: Study various online advertisements (at least 3). (1) Clearly describe each one and think carefully about the rhetorical situation. (2) What are these advertisements trying to accomplish? (3) Who are they trying to reach? (4) Do you consider them successful or not?