

Sample Ad Analysis

Speaker: Kameo Keltner

Before you begin writing the Ad Analysis Essay, you will need to choose one print advertisement to analyze. As you flip through various magazines and/or newspapers, you will see a variety of ads that appeal to a wide range of audiences. You may find the task of analyzing an ad less intimidating, though, if you choose an ad from a publication that you currently read or that you would have an interest in reading. For example, if you subscribe to *Sports Illustrated*, you might choose an ad from this publication. On the other hand, if you don't follow sports and have little knowledge of professional and college sports teams, trying to analyze an ad from *Sports Illustrated* may prove difficult. In short, if you consider yourself a potential member of the ad's target audience, you may have an advantage when you analyze the ad because you are likely familiar with the references, language, and graphics that the ad uses. Take, for example, an ad promoting Fantasy Football by featuring quarterback Eli Manning. Someone who does not follow sports may not be familiar with Fantasy Football or Eli Manning. Thus, the ways in which the ad works to appeal to its audience might be difficult for this person to discover.

Nonetheless, no matter which ad you choose to analyze, you will need to consider the ad's target audience, language, and graphics. To help you start the process, we will take some time here to analyze a couple sample advertisements. Do not use these ads in your Ad Analysis Essay. Instead, use this lecture as an example of the process you should follow when analyzing the ad that you do choose.

Fructis Shampoo Advertisement

Target Audience: This advertisement comes from an issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The target audience of this magazine consists of adult females, mainly between the ages of 18-40. These women may be married or single, but most readers are interested in romantic relationships, beauty, and fashion. The magazine includes articles about dating, sex, popular female celebrities, and weight loss. Women read the magazine to stay up-to-date on current trends and to seek answers to questions about relationship and beauty issues.

Implicit messages: *(Remember, not everyone may agree with the implicit messages for a single ad. In your essay, your claims about the ad's implicit messages are arguable. In other words, no right or wrong answer about implicit messages exists; the main objective is to make an argument about the ad's implicit messages and then support your argument about the implicit messages throughout your essay.)*

This Fructis advertisement appeals to the women in this target audience by addressing concerns about beauty, especially concerns about a woman's hair. The appearance of a woman's hair is of great concern in American society, and women are constantly seeking products and services that will help them to sculpt their hair into the latest style trend. This ad, like so many ads for hair products, seeks to exploit the insecurities a woman may feel about her hair in order to offer her a product that will build her confidence and make her beautiful. Thus, implicit messages for this ad include promising a woman beauty, confidence, and strength.

Graphics: The graphics have a strong emotional appeal (pathos). The main focus of the ad is the long-haired model pictured on the page. Like most models featured in ads for beauty products, this model tends to embody the characteristics that many women strive to have. The model has flawless skin; a thin, oval and perfectly symmetrical face; a thin body; and long, shiny hair. She seems to look the reader in the eye with a mysterious, alluring stare. She resembles countless women that we see in movies, television shows, and advertisements—she is a woman that readers assume is desired by men and envied by women. After all, she tends to fit the standard that what society has defined as “beautiful,” and the readers are accustomed to seeing these beautiful women cast in star roles in Hollywood and adored by fans and fictional male suitors. Female readers may look at this woman and feel insecure about their own appearance, but they subconsciously wonder if the Fructis shampoo might be a product that could help them become a little bit more like the model featured in the ad. Therefore, the ad tends to send the reader messages about how a woman should appear in order to be considered appealing and beautiful within American society.

The other graphics in the ad serve as emotional appeals, too. The images of fresh fruit in the top corner of the ad appeal to the target audience. The target audience tends to connect fruit to health and beauty, as society tends to endorse fruit as a beneficial way to maintain a healthy weight as well as beautiful, healthy skin and hair. The fruit connects to the name of the brand Fructis, which implies that the hair products contain fruit ingredients. Even the text on the bottles indicates that the products contain “Nutritive Fruit Micro-Oils,” a line that further pushes the idea that fruit can help a woman gain beautiful hair. The colors in the ad also reinforce the fruit theme apparent in the ad. The bright green, orange, and yellow colors make the reader think of fresh citrus fruits, such as oranges, lemons, and limes. The fruit theme gives the readers a sense of safety when using the hair products, as they associate fruit with health and beauty, so women may assume the product is a safe choice, as it could be a product that relies upon natural ingredients as opposed to chemicals and artificial ingredients.

Language: The language in this ad further promotes the ideas of beauty, and it suggests messages about confidence and strength. The words, “Sleek & Shine” appear in bold lettering on the ad. Women tend to attach positive connotations to these words, as having “sleek” hair that “shines” is deemed beneficial in our society. Of course, though, these words are subjective in nature, as what is “sleek” and what “shines” may be different to different people. The ad doesn’t go into detail to explain what degree of “shine” a consumer’s hair will have after using the products. Likewise, the ad fails to define “sleek.” While these are attractive words—most women wouldn’t want their hair described as “dull”—they are nearly meaningless words, as the ad does not give any support to how much “sleek” and “shine” a consumer should expect. While the text serves as a logical appeal (logos), as it seems to convey facts about the product, the facts are unsubstantiated. Unfortunately, many readers don’t stop to question the meaning behind these words.

Additional logical appeals appear in the text as it continues to persuade the audience by promising “smooth” hair. The text reads, “Fight the frizz. Keep it smooth. The 1st smoothing system***with nutritive fruit micro-oils from Garnier. No one makes your hair stronger.*” Again, this text seems to provide support for the product. After all, the brand has developed a “smoothing system,” and this “system” is the first one developed, according to the ad. However, the ad fails to explain this

“smoothing system.” What is it? How does it work? A critical reader may notice the three asterisk marks behind the claim and move to the bottom of the ad to read “***The Garnier Fructis Sleek & Shine System of Shampoo, Conditioner and Anti-Frizz Serum.” Apparently, the “system” includes the use of three products, but what is a “smoothing system”? The ad never says. The claim that this company has created the first “system” seems appealing as well, as it sounds as though the company has developed something new that will revolutionize hair. Women are often seeking the newest developments in beauty products to help their troublesome areas, so the claim that the company has created something new is appealing. The ad is also vague in its description of “nutritive fruit micro-oils” found in the product. Basically, this text claims to include small oils of fruit that are nourishing. How much of the product contains these oils? The ad never says, but most readers assume that these oils will help their hair become more “beautiful.”

The other strong logical appeal spans the middle of the ad reading, “STRONGER HAIR STAYS SLEEKER LONGER. (even in up to 98% humidity).**” Again, this text sounds appealing—it seems to support the effectiveness of the product, and a woman may read this line as the brand will create strong and sleek hair. However, if we read closer, we see that the text says “stronger hair.” We should ask, “stronger than what”? If we move to the small print at the bottom of the page, we see that this line refers to “*Fructis Sleek & Shine Shampoo vs. the market-leading shampoos.” Which “market-leading shampoos”? How was the test conducted? What methods were used? We don’t know—the ad never says. In the end, much of the text is empty of real meaning. However, because most readers simply glance at ads instead of critically reading the words, the reader is left persuaded, on some level, by the language.

In addition to implicitly promising beauty, the product seems to promise confidence and strength. The strength can be seen in the text, but we also see that the model in the ad appears strong and confident. She seems to look the reader in the eye, and she grasps the umbrella handle with force and strength. She pulls upon a chunk of her hair, too, showing that her hair can withstand the force of her pull. Despite the rain readers assume she is experiencing outside of her umbrella, readers assume she can maintain this strength and confidence and beauty. The rain, to many women, could cause a lack of confidence in appearance, as rain causes humidity and dampness that could prove detrimental to one’s hairstyle. However, the confidence and strength promised by the model make the reader feel assured that this product could also provide confidence and strength to the average woman who uses the products.

Cultural Significance: Like many ads, television shows, and films, this Fructis ad tends to emphasize the importance of physical beauty in American culture. However, the ad does more than just tell women that beauty is important—it seems to say that a woman is only beautiful if she has the characteristics of this woman: flawless skin, a thin physique, and long shiny hair. The ad seems to tell women that they can only feel confident if they look a certain way on the outside. And while some might believe that strength is a great quality for woman to have, this ad focuses on the strength a woman can have if her appearance meets society’s expectations for beauty. Like most beauty advertisements, this ad exploits the insecurities women feel about themselves—the ad implicitly tells women that they aren’t beautiful if they don’t have these qualities—in order to sell them a cheap product. In the end, advertisements

such as these seem to further focus on a woman's appearance and ignore her inner qualities, such as intellect, compassion, and determination. With these qualities continually being ignored in advertisements, it's no wonder women continue to feel as though they don't quite measure up to society's standards of "beautiful."

In the following example, we will not complete a thorough analysis of the ad. Instead, we will discuss some of the most notable features of the ad so that, from this lecture, you have examples of all three appeals: logical (logos), ethical (ethos), and emotional (pathos). You should also note the difference in the target audiences for each ad discussed in this lecture.

Old Spice Swagger Ad

The Old Spice Swagger ad came from a *Rolling Stone* magazine. We might note that the readers of this publication tend to follow popular culture trends in movies, music, politics, and sports. The publication tends to use some humor and sarcasm to reach its audience, and we can see this trend working in this advertisement. The Old Spice ad uses humor as an emotional appeal. It appeals to the audience by trying to make them laugh and/or smile at the "transformation" achieved by the use of the product Old Spice. The reader then, associates the positive emotion—gained through humor—with the product of Old Spice. Of course, the reader doesn't actually believe that Old Spice will make such a transformation, but that positive emotion that the ad creates through humor is enough for the reader to have a positive connection when considering the product.

Another main appeal in this ad comes from the use of Brian Urlacher. The use of this athlete represents an ethical appeal (ethos), as the advertisers work to connect the reputation of Urlacher with the product Old Spice. Readers recognize the 6'4" linebacker for the Chicago Bears as a strong and fierce athlete. Urlacher is known for sacking quarterbacks and performing hard-hitting tackles. Urlacher earned the NFL Defensive Player of the Year award in 2005. Most male readers (target audience) would describe Urlacher as strong, successful, tough, aggressive, and determined. Readers might also believe that any product endorsed by a professional athlete such as Urlacher should be a strong, hard-working product. Through the use of Urlacher as an ethical appeal, advertisers hope to persuade readers to associate the brand Old Spice with the positive reputation of this professional athlete.

Of course, many of the qualities that readers associate with Urlacher are qualities that readers associate with masculinity. Society tends to believe that men should be strong, fierce, determined, aggressive, and successful. Urlacher seems to embody all of these qualities; thus, one might argue that the ad also works to perpetuate societal views about masculinity—that men should look and act like Urlacher. This message tends to be emphasized by the "before" picture of Urlacher, as this man does not seem to exhibit the strength, confidence, or success that the "after" picture exhibits. In fact, society might describe the man in the "before" picture as weak and passive. The ad reiterates that most men would not want to be this "before" man, but most men would want to be the Urlacher in the "after" picture. Thus, the ad seems to make specific claims about how a man should and shouldn't look and behave.

Conclusion

When writing your Ad Analysis Essay, be sure to identify the rhetorical appeals— logical (logos), emotional (pathos), and ethical (ethos) used in the ad. Also, take some time to analyze the ad's target audience and determine the values, beliefs, and attitudes of this audience. The ad's message should appeal to this specific audience. Remember to include a thesis that addresses the ad's implicit messages, and work to support this thesis throughout the essay by discussing details from the ad.
