

Rhetorical analysis of pedigree advertisements advertisements

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Rhetorical Analysis of Pedigree Advertisements Advertisements are everywhere. From billboards, to magazines, to newspapers, flyers and TV commercials, chances are that you won't go a day without observing some sort of ad. In most cases, companies use these ads as persuasive tools, deploying rhetorical appeals—logos, pathos, and ethos—to move their audiences to think or act in a certain way.

The two magazine ads featured here, both endorsing Pedigree products, serve as excellent examples of how these modes of persuasion are strategically used. In the first example, we see an exaggerated, humorous depiction of yellow Labrador retriever using its “superdog” strength, which it apparently acquired from eating Pedigree, to dig up a bone buried under an asphalt street.

Here the primary means of persuasion is a pathos appeal, one that targets the audience's sense of humor. However, logos also plays an important role in this ad. The chunks of obliterated asphalt, the dog's healthy and energetic appearance, and the white, uppercase text “FOR STRONG DOGS” placed alongside the company logo together send a clear, logical message: you should feed your dog Pedigree because it will make him or her stronger and healthier.

The careful arrangement of these images indicates an obvious cause and effect strategy. When looking at this photograph, our eyes immediately move towards the digging dog, with its nearly white fur standing out amongst the gray asphalt background, then to the bone, and finally to the

text and Pedigree emblem placed in the upper right corner, implying that the Pedigree was the cause for the dog's phenomenal strength.

However, since this argument is not supported by any concrete evidence—only by an exaggerated, computer-enhanced illustration—it could be considered a post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy, since it presumes that one event—the dog digging the enormous hole in the road—was the direct result of another event—the dog eating Pedigree—simply because the latter supposedly happened before the former. If we examine the details of this photograph even more closely, we can also see that ethos is also used as a means of persuasion.

Although the image in the ad contributes to a lighthearted, humorous tone, the choice of color—mostly blacks, grays, and whites—establishes a sense of authority, as if Pedigree is confident about the product there are selling. The use of all-capital letters and an authoritative typeface for the short, declarative statement placed above and to the right of the image reinforce this ethos appeal. Perhaps more importantly, the company logo in the upper-right-corner symbolizes the caring and trustworthy reputation of Pedigree, well known for their pet adoption drives and quality products.

The second advertisement, which shows an unhappy but adorable dog behind a chain-length fence, illustrates another approach that companies may take to persuade their audiences. This magazine ad exhibits a strong pathetic appeal: the dog's sad eyes, the restricting cage, the dark, dreary background, and the heartrending narrative placed next to the image all compel the viewer to feel sorry for the homeless dog. As we look at this color

photograph, our eyes first fix upon the dog's somber eyes, cut off from freedom behind the metal fence.

Next, we move to the brightly colored story in the upper-left-hand corner, with its rounded, warmhearted font, which seems to signify a promising solution to the gloomy problem behind it, an appeal to logos. The close-up shot of the dog puts us in the shelter, looking on to the grim situation and wishing we could do something about it. The details of the narrative, with its short, blunt sentences that stab the reader right in the heart, add to this imagery: we see and feel the cold cement of the shelter and watch helplessly as the dog's expression transforms from happy to sad as people nonchalantly walk by.

Now that we have been brought into a close relationship with "Echo," we feel as if it is our responsibility to improve her situation. The final sentence of the narrative tells how we can do just that: by buying Pedigree, the proceeds of which will go toward finding loving homes for dogs like Echo. This statement, along with the heartwarming slogan placed below it, not only offers a logical solution to the homeless dog problem, but also strengthens the ethos of Pedigree: by donating to a good cause, they establish a reputation as a generous and benevolent company.

Thus, by creating appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos, companies use advertisements as powerful persuasive tools. This can be done through the careful selection of color, imagery, narration, design, and layout, to name a few significant elements. When used correctly, these rhetorical strategies

can make the difference between whether a product or idea is embraced or rejected by the public.