

Advertising Analysis Assignment

Everyday you are bombarded by advertising: on clothing, bumper stickers, billboards, in restaurants, in magazines, on television, and the Internet. The purpose is, of course, to entice us to buy or believe what is being advertised. But what strategies are being used to persuade us? This assignment will help you identify the techniques that advertisers use. In these advertisements you will likely recognize many rhetorical strategies that you have read about in our text and discussed in class.

1. Select an advertisement from a popular magazine that you own or can borrow. Cut/tear out the advertisement (or submit the entire magazine with a marker on the ad you are analyzing) — look for something that is (ideally) large, has text and images, and is trying to “sell” a product (as opposed to an idea such as an advertisement to quit smoking or a public service message). Answer each of the following questions **about the magazine**:
 - a. What magazine did the advertisement appear in (provide the title)?
 - b. What “edition” of the magazine (month or issue) did you select the ad from?
 - c. What/Who was “featured” on the cover? Describe in your own words the cover as best as possible, including the headlines and features of that particular edition.
 - d. What else was advertised in the magazine — what kinds of products or services were also featured or appeared in other ads throughout the magazine?
2. Take a few minutes to objectively look at and analyze the ad. Answer each of the following questions **about the ad**:
 - a. What is/are the product(s) being sold?
 - b. Who do you think the audience is, and how can you tell?
 - c. Write up a description of the ad for someone who has not seen it. Use specific details and describe how things are placed on the page. Make sure to include quotes from the ad or phrases used or implied.
3. Evaluate the messages and strategies that are behind the ad. What is it really saying? Try to look beyond the images and decipher what message the ad sends to consumers and viewers. Answer each of the following questions **about the ad**:
 - a. Identify the appeals of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in your advertisement. Describe in what ways you see these rhetorical appeals applied and used.
 - b. What kind of consumer would respond positively to this ad? What kind of consumer would respond negatively? Justify your reasons and why you have taken this view.
4. Finally, write a short paragraph that explains how effective or ineffective you believe **the ad** to be based on what you have learned from *Good Reasons* and through in-class discussions. You should address how the ad makes a positive or negative impact on consumers, how it fits into the larger “cultural conversation” of consumerism, and what underlying values it promotes or relies on. Be prepared to discuss your findings during class.

Note: This can easily be transitioned into small groups/flipped classroom, or an in-class exercise. You will want to bring in 8-12 different types of “popular” magazines for students to choose from, and ask them to present their findings during a final all-class discussion.