Rhetorical Analysis of Carl Jr.’s (2015) Commercial “The Most American Thickburger”

Mariah Foldes

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Dr. Guler

I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infection of the Honor Code. Mariah Foldes

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Carl Jr.’s “The Most American Thickburger” conveys its message through a commercial that was aired June 1, 2015 on TV. Carl Jr. attempts to persuade viewers, both men and women, to purchase “The Most American Thickburger” from its fast food chain. The company attempts to accomplish persuasion by featuring desired objects and individuals in the commercial. Strategically featuring an attractive and seductive supermodel Samantha Hoopes and other selected “American” materialistic items that are respected and admired in our society today in order to appeal to the viewers emotions. This very short commercial portrays many hidden messages in the effort to convince the viewers to go out in the community and purchase a Carl Jr. burger. Sexual appeal is the most obvious attempt of persuasion in the commercial. Though Carl Jr. is targeting the male population, there is some underlying female appeal as well. In this paper I will use Aristotle’s modes of persuasion and logical fallacies to analyze the strategies used in Carl Jr.’s commercial, so one may notice the power of manipulation in media.

**Methods to Draw Identification of Persuasion**

Aristotle defined modes of persuasion to convince audiences using Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Ethos focuses on persuading others through creditability and authority. Pathos is the emotional appeal and attempts to stimulate the audience feelings toward something. Thirdly, Logos is the appeal to logic using data and statistics to support reason. With addition to the three modes of persuasion I will also distinguish logical fallacies I found in Carl Jr. Commercial that weakens the value of product. Purdue University states that “Fallacies are common errors in reasoning that will undermine the logic of your argument that can be either illegitimate arguments or irrelevant points” (Purdue Writing Lab). In this paper I will present two fallacies that demonstrate error in reasoning and weakens the product that is being centered to sell.

**Using Sexual Appeal and Clichéd Themes to Create Pathos in Males**

Carl Jr.’s commercial demonstrates two rhetorical appeals. The most obvious tool is its appeal to emotions, also known as pathos. The supermodel, Samantha Hoopes, is portrayed in the first 10 seconds of the commercial wearing an American bikini (red, white, and blue) and she is sitting in a hot-tub which is placed in the back of a pick-up truck with the product (“Thickburger”) in her hand. This scene immediately grabs a male’s attention `xz and brings out the emotions of lust, desire, and longing. These are similar emotions a guy would have for an attractive sex partner and Carl Jr.’s goal is for these emotions to connect with “The Most American Thickburger”. Furthermore, the commercial uses masculine and stereotypical “American” objects to appeal to a male’s emotions in hope to gain support for the product. The commercial portrays a customized large pick-up truck that has a flag painted on the side. The large lavish and decorative truck is sitting on an American military air-craft carrier with Lady Liberty in the background. Carl Jr. is trusting that any American loving man that watches this commercial is going to gain the desire to go out and purchase a Carl Jr.’s “Most American Thickburger”. Additionally, displaying the Aircraft Carrier is appealing to emotions as well. America holds a lot of respect for our military and rights of freedom. Many American’s are willing to die for our country’s freedom, so emotions of loyalty, strength and courage are felt. The overwhelming display of red, white, and blue colors, Lady Liberty (who represents freedom), New York City skyline, military Aircraft Carrier and fireworks are purposely presented so that viewers can realize the history of America and connect how far this country has come with Carl Jr.’s “Most American Thickburger”.

**An Underlying Scheme to Establish Pathos in Females**

Carl Jr.’s commercial also appeals to the emotions of females. Women will feel envious. Traditionally in America’s society women yearn for a healthy and good-looking body figure. Eating healthy and staying active is how an individual achieves a good-looking body. However, Carl Jr. puts an unhealthy loaded “Thickbuger” in the hands of a supermodel with a great looking body; therefore, making women viewers feel that it is acceptable to eat his burgers since the beautiful supermodel Samantha Hoopes did and she is still healthy and attractive. It would not benefit Carl Jr.’s business if it was an obese woman eating the unhealthy loaded “Thickburger” because that would confirm to viewers, especially women that Carl Jr. is a fast-food restaurant with unhealthy food choices.

**Staging an Experienced and Qualified Supermodel to Establish Ethos**

Carl Jr.’s commercial attempts to persuade viewers by using ethos. The company does not just pick any seductive and attractive female to play in the commercial, but it does use the popular supermodel Samantha Hoopes. Samantha Hoopes is experienced and an expert in modeling. Hoopes is an American model known for her appearances in the Sports illustrated swimsuits. Carl Jr. picked her because she is credible, experienced, and fits the role the company is attempting to convey. Furthermore, Carl Jr. purposely chooses a bikini model who is comfortable showing off her body figure because they want a half-naked woman to be featured in order to grab a man’s attention. It would not benefit Carl Jr. to choose a model that is unknown in the industry for the purpose of sexually appealing to others. The company’s goal is to influence others using sexual appeal.

**Carl Jr. Shows Its Targeted Audience What They Want to See Through Logical Fallacies**

Carl Jr.’s commercial fails to provide Aristotle’s appeal to logic in attempt to persuade viewers to purchase “The Most American Thickburger”. The commercial does not show data or statistics to highlight its product. However, the commercial does express two logical fallacies. First one being AD POPULEM, which is defined as an appeal to the people, to what they want to hear or see. In the commercial, Carl Jr. appeals to the American people of the United States by using repetition. The commercial repeats the word “America/American” in almost every sentence. Carl Jr. even names the burger “The Most American Thickburger”. Additionally, the company hires an American supermodel and verbally states that she is American in the commercial. Carl Jr. displays what every American loving individual admires, our Lady Liberty who is “gazing” and “admiring” Carl Jr.’s “Most American Thickburger”. The Commercial was purposely scheduled to be released on June 1st, 2015 because that date is “sandwiched” between two historical patriotic days, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.

Carl Jr. demonstrates the logical fallacy BANDWAGON APPEAL, which is termed as if “everybody’s doing it,” then don’t you want to “get on the bandwagon?”. This logical fallacy is being presented in the commercial when Carl Jr. presents stereotypical American themes in support of “The Most American Thickburger” making the viewers feel like they should support the burger too. Carl Jr. even states in the commercial that Lady Liberty is “admiring” the “most American Thick-Burger”. Additionally, a large customized pick-up truck is the stereotypical American car that has an American bull-rider driving it. Carl Jr. message is black and white, if you are an American you should be eating our burger. The commercial purposely flashes materialistic objects to display what American people should look and have.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the main themes presented in Carl Jr. “The Most American Thickburger” commercial is the objectification of women for sexual appeal and the over-the-top patriotism to persuade viewers to “hop on the bandwagon”. These themes are pointed out using Aristotle's modes of persuasion, as well as logical fallacies that show error in reasoning. The commercial attempts to sell a loaded fast food cheeseburger by appealing to a viewer's ethos and pathos. It accomplishes this by featuring a half-naked supermodel, Samantha Hoopes, who is experienced in the field so a man will desire and crave Carl Jr.’s food. Additionally, the supermodel appeals to a female's emotions by making her feel that it is acceptable to eat the unhealthy loaded cheeseburger because the model does, and she still looks fit and attractive. Further emotions arise due to the overwhelming patriotism showcased throughout the commercial. The commercial was first aired June 1st, 2015 which was strategically planned to get people reminiscing from Memorial Day and in the mood for Independence Day. Finally, the logical fallacies aim to help persuade viewers that if you are a die-hard American Citizen then you need to experience the “The Most American Thickburger”. Ways to improve the commercial is to focus on the product itself rather than focusing on irrelevant themes and people that have nothing to do the burger. Carl Jr.’s commercial instead should focus on the making of the burger and present the toppings such as lettuce, tomato, angus beef patty. This would be better suited and relevant for the content of the commercial.

References

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