

Persuasive Techniques in Advertising

The persuasive strategies used by advertisers who want you to buy their product can be divided into three categories: **pathos**, **logos**, and **ethos**.

Pathos: an appeal to emotion.

An advertisement using **pathos** will attempt to evoke an emotional response in the consumer. Sometimes, it is a positive emotion such as happiness: *an image of people enjoying themselves while drinking Pepsi*. Other times, advertisers will use negative emotions such as pain: *a person having back problems after buying the "wrong" mattress*. **Pathos** can also include emotions such as fear and guilt: *images of a starving child persuade you to send money*.

Logos: an appeal to logic or reason.

An advertisement using **logos** will give you the evidence and statistics you need to fully understand what the product does. The **logos** of an advertisement will be the "straight facts" about the product: *One glass of Florida orange juice contains 75% of your daily Vitamin C needs*.

Ethos: an appeal to credibility or character.

An advertisement using **ethos** will try to convince you that the company is more reliable, honest, and credible; therefore, you should buy its product. **Ethos** often involves statistics from reliable experts, such as *nine out of ten dentists agree that Crest is the better than any other brand* or *Americas dieters choose Lean Cuisine*. Often, a celebrity endorses a product to lend it more credibility: *Catherine Zeta-Jones makes us want to switch to T-Mobile*.

Practice labeling **pathos**, **logos**, and **ethos** by placing a **P**, **L**, or **E** in the blank :

- _____ A child is shown covered in bug bites after using an inferior bug spray.
- _____ Tiger Woods endorses Nike.
- _____ Sprite Zero is 100% sugar-free.
- _____ A 32-oz. bottle of Tide holds enough to wash 32 loads.
- _____ A commercial shows an image of a happy couple riding in a Corvette.
- _____ Cardiologists recommend Ecotrin more than any other brand of aspirin.
- _____ Advil Liqui-Gels provide up to 8 hours of continuous pain relief.
- _____ Miley Cyrus appears in Oreo advertisements.
- _____ People who need more energy drink Red Bull Energy Drink.
- _____ A magazine ad shows people smiling while smoking cigarettes.

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The following are some more specific strategies that advertisers use. Often, they overlap with the rhetorical strategies above.

Avante Garde

The suggestion that using this product puts the user ahead of the times. *A toy manufacturer encourages kids to be the first on their block to have a new toy.*

Weasel Words

“Weasel words” are used to suggest a positive meaning without actually really making any guarantee. *A scientist says that a diet product might help you to lose weight the way it helped him to lose weight. A dish soap leaves dishes virtually spotless.*

Magic Ingredients

The suggestion that some almost miraculous discovery makes the product exceptionally effective. *A pharmaceutical manufacturer describes a special coating that makes their pain reliever less irritating to the stomach than a competitor’s.*

Patriotism

The suggestion that purchasing this product shows your love of your country. *A company brags about its product being made in America.*

Transfer

Positive words, images, and ideas are used to suggest that the product being sold is also positive. *A textile manufacturer wanting people to wear their product to stay cool during the summer shows people wearing fashions made from their cloth at a sunny seaside setting where there is a cool breeze.*

Plain Folks

The suggestion that the product is a practical product of good value for ordinary people. *A cereal manufacturer shows an ordinary family sitting down to breakfast and enjoying their product.*

Snob Appeal

The suggestion that the use of the product makes the customer part of an elite group with a luxurious and glamorous lifestyle. *A coffee manufacturer shows people dressed in formal gowns and tuxedos drinking their brand at an art gallery.*

Bribery

Bribery offers you something “extra.” *Buy a burger; get free fries.*

Bandwagon

The suggestion that you should join the crowd or be on the winning side by using a product—you don’t want to be the only person without it!