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Rhetorical Analysis Paper

In present day America, the current obesity crisis is visible everywhere one looks. The United States is currently the most over weight nation in the world and despite efforts such as the NFL’s Play 60 to encourage exercise in children this problem does not seem to be going anywhere anytime soon. The majority of Americans would rather spend what little down time they have watching television or on the Internet. In the midst of this crisis, Nike recently launched a campaign titled “#makeITcount”, which encourages people to exercise and also promotes their new product, the Nike+ FuelBand. A new ad released by Nike successfully targets their specific audience while generating pathos and ethos. In addition to appealing to the emotions of the audience, the ad responds to kairos created by New Years and the obesity crisis while trying to redefine the ideologies many people hold about exercising.

The audience that Nike is targeting with this ad is a broad audience. They are appealing to the people who believe they are too busy in their daily lives and do not have enough time to go to the gym. The Nike+ FuelBand is actually a product that these people can use to keep track of how much they move during the day, which makes every action they do count towards their daily goal of calorie loss or distance traveled. Unlike “traditional” sports ads, which may show an ambiguous athlete struggling to complete their workout, this ad shows pop culture figures doing a wide range of motion, from walking to kung fu to dancing. This exhibits to the audience that there is a broad range of exercise and many everyday activities actually count towards their ultimate goal. This is appealing to today’s masses because there are a lot of people who are unhappy with their body and want to get in shape, but do not have enough time or money to go to the gym. The Nike+ FuelBand allows its users to keep track of daily movement and see how many calories they burn or how much they walk in everyday life.

Nike’s ad also has a strong pathetic and ethical appeal. Their ad is very unlike “traditional” sports ads, which have slow building music and make exercising look difficult or almost make the viewer feel guilty for not working out. The Nike+ FuelBand ad plays on pathos in a different way. The clips shown are light hearted and make exercising look fun. The colors are also very vibrant and the music playing makes the viewers want to get up and dance. It also is very fast paced, going through almost fifty-five clips in its short sixty second time frame. The pathetic appeal in this ad generates a feeling of excitement in the audience.

Another way the ad appeals to the audience’s emotions is by using a broad range of pop culture figures not only creating an antithesis between the types of movement, but also between the people moving. By showing may different types of characters in the ad, the viewer is more likely to pick out one that they relate to. One example of this is between Ricky Gervais and Gerard Butler. Ricky Gervais is slightly overweight and is shown dancing in a crazy manner in the idle of his office. The ad then immediately switches to a clip of an incredibly fit and muscular Gerard Butler as a Spartan Warrior from the movie *300* fighting in battle. By using different people and highlighting different types of movement, the audience is able to relate to the characters shown in the commercial, which is another appeal to pathos.

Ethos is the way the audience interprets the speaker’s character. Nike has already established itself as a highly respected company. They clothe many different types of people from Olympic athletes to high school sports teams to moms who simply need running clothes. This company is already highly regarded in society and the viewer will trust them immediately. Nike relies heavily on their strong appeal to ethos in this ad. There is no mention of the company throughout the entire commercial. Normally, the company will show an athlete working out in their clothes, shoes or with their sporting equipment. In this ad they use all pop culture figures and no one is seen wearing Nike clothes. The audience doesn’t even know that the ad is for a Nike product until the very last clip when it just shows the Nike trademark “swoosh”. The Nike “swoosh” symbol is one of the most recognizable symbols, next to the Golden Arches of McDonalds. The “swoosh” shown at the end of the ad is the only mention of Nike in the ad. The company is relying heavily on their ethos to gain the trust of the consumer by hoping they recognize the symbol with which they are associated.

There are aspects of this ad that make it successful but are not actually in the ad. The timing that the ad was released enhances its effective nature. The “#makeITcount” campaign was launched January 19, 2012, roughly three weeks after New Year’s and around the time that most people are breaking their New Year’s Resolutions. Out of the top five Resolutions made in 2012, two were to get in shape and to enjoy life more. Nike took advantage of the kairos created by this situation and took advantage of it by launching a product that will allow people to get in shape while they enjoy life. They are trying to keep people motivated that would generally abandon their resolutions after a few weeks.

While the specific launch date was in response to the kairos created by people abandoning their New Year’s Resolutions, but it is also reacting to the over arching kairos created by the obesity crisis occurring in America. The antithesis shown between the different types of people shown will essentially allow people who are overweight or out of shape to relate to the characters in the ad and inspire them to get in shape. For many people who are overweight, it is embarrassing taking those first steps and going to the gym for the first time while they are surrounded by people who are all fit. The Nike+ FuelBand will appeal to the audience members who are not in shape and show them that there are many simple steps that they can take to start exercising, such as walking or taking the stairs. By releasing this product at a time when about one in four Americans are overweight is strategic because people who do not want to go to the gym will be more likely to purchase the Nike+ FuelBand.

With this ad, Nike is trying to recreate our community’s entire ideology in regards to what exercising should be. The commonplaces that exist today are that exercising is hard, you should have to push yourself to reach your goals and that it will be extremely challenging to reach that goal. However Nike is trying to redefine what exercising means to us and bring it back to what it was like when we ere children and when exercising simply meant kicking a ball around on a field with friends. Now, as adults, suddenly that is seen as juvenile; one not only needs to workout, but they need to do so in a mature fashion, with expensive equipment and fancy workout gear. Nike uses its pathetic and ethical appeals while taking advantage of the kairos created by New Years and the obesity crisis to prove to its audience that you do not need an expensive gym membership or fancy equipment to exercise. Everything you do in your daily life, from walking to taking the stairs, can help you reach whatever goal you set for yourself.