

Mia-Myline Medina
Old Dominion University
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Just a Piece of Meat: Carl's Jr. Ad Analysis

Throughout history, companies have continuously utilized female figures in order to support their cause. Rosie the Riveter, for example, was created to boost morale by empowering females and encouraging mothers, daughters, and sisters to take action during a time of crisis. Not all advertisements involving women have stuck to an uplifting and respectful message, however. Fast Food restaurant, Carl's Jr., in their 2005 televised commercial for the "Spicy BBQ Burger," objectifies a female celebrity as a ploy to pursue their male consumers to buy their product. Through the use of anaphora, appeal to celebrity, and pathos, Carl's Jr. creates a controversial commercial that is successful in adding a larger population of men to their consumer base.

Repetition is useful when one needs to emphasize a specific aspect of a speech or presentation. Anaphora is a tool heavily used in the visuals as well as the audio portion of Carl's Jr.'s thirty-second commercial. The scene opens with a scantily clad Paris Hilton, backlit by sunlight as she struts into a garage. Backlighting creates a crisp silhouette of her frame which foreshadows the focal point of the video. The following scenes provide a series of slow motion close-up shots that emphasize various parts of Hilton's body in seductive positions- such as those seen in pornographic magazines and videos. The cyclic use of sexually charged close-ups is intended to captivate the audience's attention. While women may also be interested in the content of the commercial, men seem to be the targeted audience due to the fact that they are

“more than six times as likely” to view pornographic material as women are (Stack et. al., pg. 85). Not only is anaphora seen, but it is also heard in the soundtrack. Music increases the attention payed to Hilton by repeating the phrase “I love Paris...” every six seconds throughout the duration of the commercial. Though the song is about Paris, France, the lyrics are used as a double entendre- speaking to the woman rather than the place. Through the recurrence of Hilton’s name in relation to her presence in the ad, Carl’s Jr. ensures that the focus remains on the actress and her actions or interactions with the things around her. Hilton’s celebrity status combined with the presence of furs, jewels, and fancy cars aid the company in its pursuit to persuade the audience to become a part of the action by purchasing their product.

Understandably so, many individuals long for things or situations that are perceived as high-class in order to bring them one step closer to self-actualization. Paris Hilton, heiress to the Hilton hotel company, is seen as a celebrity who has everything. Presumably, Carl’s Jr. is aware of Hilton’s status- not only as a rich and famous individual, but as a sex-symbol through the release of her controversial sex tape- and cast her intentionally to spark feelings of desire for her and what she has. In the video, Hilton drops her posh fur shawl and begins to dance on and around an expensive Rolls Royce. The commercial exudes extravagance. In fact, the least luxurious part of the commercial, the burger, is saved for the last ten seconds. By pairing a Carl’s Jr. burger with a glamorous celebrity boasting high-class luxuries, the status of the burger itself is heightened. When a consumer thinks about the “Spicy BBQ Burger,” they will automatically recall the swanky and sexy commercial related to it. The consumer will then purchase the product because they feel that having the product will link them in some way to the high life of the celebrity featured in the video. The same technique is used for clothing brands and jewelry dealers. If the celebrities endorse it, the admiring consumer will want it even more. Emotional

manipulation is a powerful tool when convincing the public to do anything from voting for a new president to purchasing a burger from a fast-food restaurant.

The company's advertisement relays little to no information on the burger itself, leaving the audience with important questions such as what is in the burger and when it will be released. Logos is left behind and replaced with Pathos- a seemingly more accepted rhetorical device when speaking to an entire population of people. Not everyone will be swayed by facts or even the credibility of those revealing the facts, but emotions are powerful attributions to a cause. Emotions can be felt long after the memory of a fact has faded, as suggested by a study with Alzheimer patients held at the University of Iowa in September of 2014 (Reihl, para. 12). The commercial, though controversial, is intense enough, with its use of sexually provocative material, to warrant strong feeling of desire from its viewers. These emotions, in turn, linger in the subconscious and aid in the support and purchase of Carl's Jr. products. The consumer makes these decisions either consciously or subconsciously and has the potential to feel emotional satiety once the transaction is complete due to, as previously mentioned, their desire to become self-actualized in relation to the success of others. Contrary to the belief of many that find the ad to be crass, and a hindrance to the achievements of the company, Carl's Jr. obtains popularity with the ad.

As far as success goes, Carl's Jr. manages to gain a large following from their seductive commercial and even had a website crash since the website they released the ad on was "unequipped to handle the unexpected traffic volume" of countless viewers visiting the page (Explosive Response to Paris Hilton Ad Crashes Carl's Jr. Web Site, para. 2). The combination of repetition, celebrity involvement, and emotional appeal, aided the company in persuading a large population of men to involve themselves with the new "Spicy BBQ Burger". It may be the

sexual content that keeps these viewers coming back for more, but the publicity received from the controversy surrounding the commercial allows the company to reach a vast population of potential consumers and therefore, qualifies the ad to be recognized as successful.

Works Cited

“Explosive Response to Paris Hilton Ad Crashes Carl's Jr. Web Site.” *Carl's Jr.*®, Carl's Jr. Restaurants LLC., 23 May 2005

Reihl, John. “Alzheimer's Patients Can Still Feel the Emotion Long after the Memories Have Vanished.” *Iowa Now*, 24 Sept. 2014.

Steven Stack, Ira Wasserman, and Roger Kern, “Adult Social Bonds and Use of Internet Pornography,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85, (2004): 75-88 (85).