

- **Student Sample, Rhetorical Analysis**

A New Kind of Car Commercial: Mercedes-Benz's Rhetorically Successful Advertisement

In the 1940's America was reeling after the Great Depression and WWII. Society found comfort and stability in conformity and regularity, and was drawn to the new suburbia. As families began to migrate away from the city and into their cookie-cutter neighborhoods, the need for cars in order to commute became increasingly widespread. The government invested in this need by creating interstate highways and bridges in order to accommodate commuters, while neglecting resources such as public train systems. Ever since then, the car has been a staple of American society. Every year, car companies develop new and impressive technology to enhance their product, which used to be advertised on the radio and then, soon after that, on the televisions. Presently, commercials for new cars seem to be on every channel at every hour of the day. Audiences have grown accustomed to the sweeping vistas with newly modeled cars zooming around tight corners on slick roads; it sometimes feels like every car commercial is the same. While these commercials are rhetorically successful, they've become boring and have lost their appeal. Mercedes-Benz has broken out of this mold while still remaining aware of correctly utilizing rhetorical concepts in their new "Sorry" commercial for the E-Class with Brake Assist Plus. They created a successful advertisement because of their clear understanding of their audience as well as their correct implementation of ethos, pathos, and logos.

The purpose of this new commercial is to entice consumers with the new Brake Assist Plus feature. Mercedes-Benz advertisers are very aware of the competitive international automobile market. The competition for creating an interesting and effective marketing campaign is incredibly aggressive, with each car company developing different and attractive features to advertise. Mercedes-Benz is trying to set itself apart from its challengers by

emphasizing its own innovative feature, the Brake Assist Plus. They do this by creating a scenario in which the Brake Assist Plus technology is tested in order to demonstrate to the audience how effective it is. Mercedes-Benz is essentially arguing that this incredible safety feature is only available in their vehicle, so if the consumer is attracted to the Brake Assist Plus, they should buy the new E-Class.

Mercedes-Benz is a brand of car that is typically associated with the wealthy upper class. This commercial is trying to expand the consumer base by appealing to drivers who are concerned with investing in innovative and remarkable safety features. The typical car commercial audience is older, financially stable members of society. Narrowing down this range of consumers, we can see that Mercedes-Benz is not only attempting to appeal to those that are usually attracted to the status of the company, but also to those who are willing to invest in a dependable and reliable car that will be worth the extra cost. These consumers are in their early forties and are planning on driving the E-Class for a long time. They are at a point in their lives where they can handle expensive car payments and believe that this car will be a sound investment in the future. You can tell that this is the audience that Mercedes-Benz is targeting because the driver in the commercial appears to mirror the described image. He looks younger, is well groomed and is dressed cleanly in a blazer and a white button-up shirt. They also don't reveal that the commercial is for Mercedes-Benz until after the Brake Assist Plus has been demonstrated in hopes that the audience will be induced by the feature before they find out that it will probably be expensive.

This commercial has successful ethos because, although the Mercedes-Benz logo doesn't enter until the very end of the commercial, it is such a recognizable symbol that it is still effective. Mercedes-Benz has been well-known and successful for a substantial amount of time

and it is recognized by many generations of drivers. This company is also known for developing and selling cars that are on the more expensive end of the automobile market spectrum.

Mercedes-Benz has become a status symbol for most Americans because of its reputation for being costly. People are willing to pay the extra money for a Mercedes because it makes them look and feel wealthier. Knowing that the new E-Class is a Mercedes-Benz will help the customer to feel more comfortable and accepting of the commercial because of their long and successful history.

Pathos is also used throughout this commercial in order to invest the audience in the story and to make the commercial memorable. The advertisement guides the audiences' emotions in order to lead them to the desired conclusion. It begins with a serene and calm landscape of a snowy day on a back road through the woods. This makes the appearance of the Grim Reaper in the passenger seat especially shocking. The marketers are careful not to make the Reaper look too frightening or caricatured; he is simply an elderly, bald, man who is well dressed besides wearing a hooded black cloak and carrying the traditional scythe. After the initial shock of the appearance of the Grim Reaper, the audience is then immediately confronted with the car nearly colliding into a crane clearing a fallen tree in the middle of the road. Relief quickly comes when the Brake Assist Plus successfully stops the car and saves the driver from death. The commercial includes a long camera shot in order to show how close the car actually came to crashing, giving the spectators a sense of awe towards the effectiveness of the Brake Assist Plus system. The driver then mocks the Grim Reaper and ends the commercial on a humorous note. Although the humor in this commercial is the last line of dialogue, all of the emotional build-up makes this moment very effective and unforgettable. The consumer will remember the emotional experience of this commercial, which is a success for Mercedes-Benz.

This commercial provides its audience with a solid logical argument. Because the purpose of this advertisement is to highlight the unique Brake Assist Plus system, it is logical to show a scenario that demonstrates the effectiveness of the E-Class's brakes. The audience is also familiar with the character of the Grim Reaper and understands that he appears when someone is about to die. It is logical, then, that the driver has a near-death experience after the Reaper's appearance. This scenario not only demonstrates the successfulness of the brakes by showing the car make a sudden stop, but it also includes snowy and wet road conditions as factors that the Brake Assist Plus technology can overcome.

Mercedes-Benz created a successful commercial because each aspect of rhetoric is used in an organized and correct way. While some commercials do not have a balance of the rhetorical structure, this advertisement included ethos, pathos, and logos in an appropriate way. Every aspect was used differently, but in a manner that supported the ultimate purpose and goal of the advertisement. The marketers also clearly targeted the proper audience who they were going to be able to convince to purchase the vehicle. The commercial's argument was understandable and successfully articulated throughout the situation. While this advertisement relied mostly on pathos, the correct use of all of the elements of rhetoric make this commercial successful.