

Frederick Chang
PWR 3-2 Section 9:00-10:15
Rhetorical Analysis Final Draft
1/21/03
Alyssa O'Brien

Apple Computer's Snail Beats Intel Processor

The year is 1998, and Intel has just released the Pentium II processor. Touting it as the fastest processor on earth, Intel proceeds to flood television screens with colorful images of blazing fast computers, finishing off each commercial with the "Intel, Pentium 2" logo and a catchy four tone tune. Apple, struggling with diminishing shares in the personal computer market, responds with the "Think Different" advertising campaign, a great marketing success for Apple. Some of the advertisements featured black and white photos of famous people like Albert Einstein, Miles Davis and Pablo Picasso – people who thought they could change the world, and did. And then there were those ads that featured "toasted" Intel technicians in their spacesuit like "bunny suits", as well as the snail carrying the Intel processor on its back. These advertisements on a whole were very effective in convincing people to "think different" and use a Mac, but the commercial featuring a slowly meandering snail carrying the Pentium 2 processor really struck a chord with many people. By implicit and direct statement, Apple Computers had offered everyone in front of TV sets a chance to "think different" and cast aside those deceptive Intel commercials. Through the use of rhetorical strategies such as carefully selected phrases, symbolic comparisons, and lethargy-producing movements and music, Apple Computers effectively wooed consumers away from the inhuman computing monster Intel.

Using the deliberate slowness of the advertisement, Apple appeals to the viewer to logically reconsider the sluggishness of the Intel processor. Apple masterfully uses

background music to both woo and relax the viewer, brainwashing their audience. The background music, a lazy jazz waltz, while setting the stage for the swaying movement of the snail, conveys a general feeling of lethargy. This feeling lethargy is then projected implicitly upon the subject of the advertisement: the snail and the Intel processor. Furthermore, the music sounds distinctly similar to a lullaby – soothing music used to woo a young baby. Indirectly, Apple uses the music to place the audience into the crib – a place of innocence and ignorance. Apple then uses another aural element, the voice of the announcer, to take the idea of a mother wooing baby one step further.

Figure 1: Snail Carrying the Intel Pentium II Processor; Announcer's voice reads, "Some people think the Pentium 2 is the fastest processor in the world. Not quite. The chip in every new PowerMac G3, is up to twice as fast."

This time, Apple uses the voice of the announcer to appeal ethically to the viewer. While declaring the Pentium processor slower than the Power Macintosh G3, the phrase "not quite" hints at distrust and skepticism regarding Intel claims of speediness above all. Furthermore, the tone of the announcer on a whole, the pregnant pauses, as well as the background music, helps the advertisement gain the trust of the audience, setting the audience up for the snail to make a logical appeal.

Apple utilizes the snail to form a logical argument that users of the Intel processor will feel the same laziness due to the sluggish Intel processor. The slow motion action of the advertisement – the sluggish snail, the slow panning and zooming of the camera – reinforces the idea that the Pentium 2 is a slow processor. The slow motion of the advertisement, contrasted with the quickly flashing images that appear on the Macintosh

computer screen, makes clear the superior computing platform. This perfect juxtaposition between the sluggish snail and the fast and powerful Macintosh, logically appeals to the viewer, contrasting the fast with the slow and asking the viewer to make a judgment. This subtle logical appeal, strongly played upon in the advertisement, becomes one of the fundamental instruments in the success of the Apple snail advertisement. When buying high priced items such as computers, a faster processor, a better display, or more capabilities all appeal logically. Apple capitalizes strongly on this concept of “bigger = better”, basing the bulk of the advertisement around the logical appeals generated by the juxtaposition between snail and Mac.

Even though the logical appeal is utilized strongly, the advertisement also appeals ethically and emotionally to the audience, showing them the greatly encumbered snail as a victim of the black, blocky Intel processor. The usage of directly contrasting colors as seen in Figure 1 – the white background, the black processor, the dark colored snail – appeals ethically to the viewer and produces the feeling that Apple Computers is the good, white knight, while Intel is the dark force trying to mislead consumers through their lies and deceptions. The appeal upon pathos becomes most effective when the audience connects with the snail carrying the processor. During the advertisement, the snail turns left and right, at times, almost looking at the audience, as if pleading for the viewer to take the horrible weight of the processor off of its back.

The use of the processor itself generates many powerful feelings in the viewer. Apple’s decision to use the Intel processor within the advertisement was very tactful: 1) the viewer of the commercial would probably recognize the black processor from Intel commercials; 2) the processor has a menacing look because of its ominous black casing

and rectangular shape, threatening to squash the snail; and 3) the average consumer, when presented with too complicated of a choice, tends to choose the simpler one – the Macintosh – instead of having to deal with the seemingly complex processor. Furthermore, the black processor seems like a taint upon the pure white background – the whiteness emphasizing purity and innocence of the audience.

Just like a mother wooing a baby, the Apple commercial woos the audience through a powerful coordination of music, speech, and image. The success of the “Think Different” campaign was realized not only in the increase in sales, but most importantly in the publicity and supporters that Apple gained. Unfortunately for Apple, Intel’s newer processors soon advanced in speed and surpassed the Macintosh. However, Apple’s snail advertisement left a deep impression in viewers’ minds that lasts until today. In fact, Apple advertisements produced after the Snail all echoed the same rhetorical strategies, communicating how a Macintosh makes using a computer easier, simpler, and more fun. Through this advertisement, we can see that Apple’s use of strong, yet subtle rhetorical appeals provides a clear and powerful argument, convincing the viewer of the superiority of the Power Macintosh over the Intel processor.

Works Cited

Apple. Advertisement. <<http://www.uriah.com/apple-qt/movies/snail2.mov>>

[Interactivity] – Funzone. 1 January 2003. <<http://www.intermactivity.be/funzone.php?funid=7>>