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“iPod Overtake Through Use of *Ethos*, *Pathos* and *Logos*”

The Mach Speed Eclipse, the Sansa Clip Zip, Sansa Fuze, and the Samsung Galaxy all have a commonality: they are technological devices. If you are like most Americans, chances are you do not know what these devices are and have never heard of them before. Thus, the question is, what kind of technological device are they? These devices are [MP3](#) players. That’s right, they are essentially an iPod. Due to the fact these pieces of technology are so unheard of, this paper will argue that through Apple Inc.’s use of the rhetorical principle of invention in its 2003 “Silhouette” print advertisement campaign, the company has made consumers forget there was ever another option for listening to music on the go.

Rhetoric, as established by Aristotle, is an available means to persuasion. As cited by Deanna Sellnow, Aristotle’s rhetoric entails five “canons” or steps: invention, arrangement, style, delivery and memory (30-32). As previously stated, this paper evaluates the Apple Silhouette print advertisement campaign strictly from the standpoint of invention. Invention, the first of the canons, has to do with the ideas behind the message which is to be delivered to an audience (Sellnow 30). In order for a rhetorician (a speaker) or a messenger (such as a modern-day corporation) to persuade an audience, he (or it) must use three appeals: *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. In short, *ethos* refers to ethics, *pathos* to emotional appeal, and *logos* to logic (Sellnow 30). Each of these terms will be

further explained in their respective sections in order to gain a full understanding and see the connection of these appeals to the Apple Silhouette advertisements.

To begin, *ethos* does refer to ethics; however, it refers specifically to the ethics of the rhetorician or the messenger. Author and professor Lena Hall provides a formal definition in her book *Dictionary of Multicultural Psychology: Issue, Terms and Concepts*, “*Ethos* is a Greek word meaning the values or characteristics of a specific person, people, movement or culture” (1). Thus, the ethical standpoint of Apple must be evaluated here, as it is the messenger.

Apple Inc. was founded in 1976 by Steve Wozniack and the late Steve Jobs (“The History of Apple Inc.”). Wozniak and Jobs shared a passion for innovation and simplicity. They applied those passions to the world of technology. For years the company was known for its user-friendly iMac Desktop and iBook Laptop. The product that brought Apple into the mainstream of consumer culture, however, was the [iPod](#). Isabel Pederson of Ryerson University and author of the article, “‘No Apple iPhone? You Must Be Canadian’: Mobile Technologies, Participatory Culture, and Rhetorical Transformation,” defines the iPod as Apple’s version of a portable music player, which comes in various sizes, colors and storage capacities (496).

At the time of introducing the iPod in 2001, Apple had a longstanding reputation for quality customer service, reliable products, and endless improvements on modern-day gadgets. These characteristics are what made the company trustworthy in consumers’ minds. Due to its upstanding reputation, Apple had a great following, or what Pederson terms “participatory culture” (492). Here, participatory culture refers to the admiration consumers had for Apple and thus, their willingness to support and generate excitement

for its new product, the iPod. Apple introduced the iPod to the mass public with the *ethos* it had acquired from its past products.

When Apple introduced the iPod, other MP3 players were already on the market, which meant Apple had to find a way to differentiate its product from the competition. Apple was aware of the mixed feelings people had during this introduction of digital music for the masses in the early 2000s. There was much controversy, as music had never been listened to digitally. Thus, it was essential to the success of the iPod that Apple not focus on the questions and doubts people had, but rather generate excitement about the future of music. Apple's focus on excitement is found in the *pathos* and *logos* of the Silhouette campaign.

To infuse the excitement of music in mainstream culture, Apple launched the now famous [Silhouette](#) print advertisement campaign. The campaign, which debuted in 2003, features a series of black silhouettes dancing against a brightly colored background with the iPod in hand ("The Distinctive iPod Advertising Campaign"). The Silhouette campaign has resulted in tremendous success for Apple. In 2004, the campaign received one of the highest advertising awards possible: the [Grand Effie Award](#). Effie Awards are given to advertising campaigns on a variety of levels, with "Grand" being the highest.

The question is "Why was this particular campaign so successful?" To answer that question, the campaign must be examined through the lens of *pathos* and *logos* as established by Aristotle.



The technique of *pathos* is about appealing to the heart, to emotion. As said by Jodi Choen, author of *Communication Criticism: Developing Your Critical Powers*, Aristotle defined *pathos* as, “all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure” (91). These Silhouette commercials pertain to pleasure and affect judgment as they generated excitement about the age of digital music. As Pederson further explains, these commercials make a viewer desire the iPod because they “embody freedom and play” (492). The advertisements reminded people just how much they love music; they visually demonstrated how great life would be with music on the go. The advertisements enticed viewers to be like the silhouettes: in their own world, listening to their favorite song, dancing as if no body was watching.

Further, the advertisements explained the iPod was not just for a certain kind of people. The differences in the types of people in the advertisements demonstrate the iPod is for any person who loves music. The silhouettes indicate young and old, male and

female people dancing to rock music, pop music, Latin music and many more types of music. Thus, an underlying message is created: the *kind* of music a person likes also does not matter; as long as one loves music, he or she deserves, even needs, an iPod. By using a variety of people and types of dancing, Apple informed the public that the iPod did not discriminate. Discrimination has a major taboo in American society; thus, by eliminating such a factor, people wanted to buy the iPod and *only* the iPod.

Lastly, in *pathos*, is the appeal to an individual's freedom of expression. The iPod is a revolutionary device because it allows one to store a "lifetime's worth" of music all in one place. Being able to do so makes the device extremely personal and representative of the user (Pederson 497). All of the songs one loves can be added to the iPod and the songs one hates can be left off, creating the ultimate library of songs for the user. Apple was able to persuade viewers of their need for an iPod through the use of *pathos* by appealing to people's love of music regardless of age, gender, or genre preference; Apple also appealed to emotion through the emphasis of the personalization the iPod allowed.

In addition to the appeal of emotion, or *pathos*, there is the appeal to *logos* in this campaign. As aforementioned, *logos* is the logical side of persuasion. A formal definition as presented by author James Jasinski is, "a rational argument or an appeal based on reason," which is the contrast to the emotional appeal of *pathos*. The combination of *pathos* and *logos* makes for an indisputable argument. Thus, a well-planned argument will use *pathos* and *logos* together (Sellnow 30-1).

The *logos* of this campaign is found in the design of the individual advertisements. According to Dr. Sohui Lee of Stanford University, an advertisement should be examined based on four principles of design: focalization, balance, repetition

and unity (“Visual Design Principles,” 3-7). Apple’s use of these principles immediately caught the attention of the viewer and made a lasting impression on the viewer, which in turn brought only the name “iPod” to mind when a viewer decided to buy an MP3 player.

Focalization is the most prominent design element of this campaign. Dr. Lee defines focalization as, “visual features or shapes on the ad page, which are to be the main focus of the viewer’s eyes” (6). In order to ensure the focus of the viewer’s eyes, the Silhouette advertisements use contrast. Contrast is defined by High Point University professor Linda Gretton as a method of differentiating items on a page via variances in color, size, font or images (“Principles of Design” Lecture).

The Silhouette advertisements quickly catch the eye because of their brightly colored backgrounds. The eye then observes the silhouette. The use of the black silhouette serves an important role because it allows viewers to picture themselves using the iPod. If Apple had used real people, a viewer could look at the advertisement but feel incapable of relating to the person they saw using the iPod.

After noticing the silhouette, the eye notices the product. In all of the advertisements the iPod is white, making it contrast against the silhouette, adding a third element of color. An author of the advertising trade, Deborah Vence, notes white has always been Apple’s signature color and the company saw no reason to change that when developing its new product (16). By keeping the iPod white, Apple made its product contrast, or stand out, among a sea of rival black devices. And so the element of focalization in design led viewers to believe that with an iPod in hand they too would stand out. This notion appeals to both logic and emotion.

Secondly, in the four design principles is balance. Balance refers to the “equilibrium of images and colors that attract the eye, providing visual balance and stability” (Lee 5). In each advertisement the colors are balanced: there is a large, bright background, then a dark shadow to add contrast, and a white iPod to bring attentiveness to the product. If the three colors were to be in equal amount the eye would have a difficult time trying to separate the colors to determine what is most important. The balancing act of a bright attention grabber, a less prominent dark color and an even lesser prominent white creates order. The message is delivered without confusion.

Another consideration of balance, are the bodies of the silhouettes, which are frozen in interesting angles as if they were caught in the process of dancing around their room. The various bends of the head, arms and back establish interest and a life-like feature. The shadows add a sense of stability because they stretch across the width of the advertisement. Finally, the placement of the iPod creates a horizontal balance. Upon looking at multiple advertisements side by side, it becomes apparent that the iPod is always placed at eye level. This way, a viewer cannot miss the product. Each Silhouette advertisement uses balance to create order, a requirement of logic.

The third element of design is repetition. Repetition in print advertisements can be found in font, form, color, image and lines. Its purpose is to aid the other elements, focalization and balance (Lee 7). Repetition creates consistency, which in print advertisements creates clarity. Due to the simplicity of the advertisements, repetition is not found within the advertisements on an individual basis, but can be seen in the series as a whole.

All of the campaign's variations use a bright background, a black dancing silhouette, and display the iPod at eye level. In each Silhouette advertisement, the product is placed in the hand of the silhouette; thus, relating the product to personal enjoyment. More than that, each advertisement repeats the same emotions and desire for the iPod. These repeated elements create a greater sense of understanding for the viewer: the iPod is made for individual pleasure, and it will go where ever you go, whenever you go. Therefore, the *logos* is that the iPod is practical because it is small and easy to carry around.

Unity is the final design principle in print advertising. It refers to the way in which the elements of the advertisement are grouped; it demonstrates how all the items on a page fit together (Lee 3). Such items can include an image, or images, headline, body copy, and logo. The Silhouette advertisements are bare on purpose, but they are not void of unity. Unity is found in the color white. Both the iPod and Apple logo are white, connecting the color of the product to the company in the mind of the consumer. Unity is also evident in the overarching design of the advertisements because each of the elements (focalization, balance and repetition) works together to convey energy, life and happiness. Here the *logos* of the viewer is: if the silhouettes love the iPod, I will too.

Correct use of the four principles of advertising design is clearly evident in Apple's Silhouette print campaign. Focalization, balance, repetition and unity join forces to make an indisputable, logical and emotional argument for the iPod: it is simple, it is entertaining, it is pleasurable, and it is convenient. Thus, the consumer is left wondering, "Why would I *not* buy an iPod?"

Nine years have passed since the first iPod silhouette advertisement. Over those nine years, Apple has created an extreme case of brand awareness through the use of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in its advertisements. The success of the iPod due to this campaign is evident in the sales numbers. Sherilynn Macale, an author for *The Next Web*, an online news source, reports these numbers: the iPod, which broke into the market in 2001, earned 78% of the MP3 player market share by 2011. At the end of 2011, a mere ten years after being introduced to the market, a total of 300 million iPods had been sold worldwide (Macale). Tim Cook, Apple CEO, is cited in the article saying, “To put that (these numbers) in context, it took Sony 30 years to sell 230,000 Walkman cassette players” (Macale).

Apple, due to its great products and equally great advertising, has become an integrated, even natural, part of American culture. It was not until trying to define the cultural impact of the Silhouette advertisement campaign I realized I could not name another kind of MP3 player. Not one. And thus my thesis was created. Apple truly has created the mindset that it is Apple or nothing at all. In fact, the article, “The Distinctive iPod Ad Campaign,” notes many consumers feel it is “pointless” to even compare the iPod to other available portable music players (AdMadness).

One can reasonably conclude the rhetorical principles of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* greatly aided the success of the Apple iPod as it is nearly impossible to name a competing product. The Silhouette campaign utilized Apple’s pre-established ethical standpoint, along with the appeal to excitement and the appeal to simplicity and convenience. The combination is irresistible and that is why the Apple iPod has reached exponential success. The iPod has gone down in history as an “undisputed star” in digital

entertainment (“Music: Taking a Bite of Apple’s Action”). Some even say, “At 5.6 ounces, it is an inanimate celebrity,” (“Apple’s Digital Music Player in High Demand”). The iPod is undoubtedly a loved part of the 21st Century culture.

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