

Skipper Scholar

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English Composition I

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### Halloween with Pepsi

Pepsi is a carbonated soft drink made by PepsiCo and is well recognized due to its distinctive brand, logo, and many partnerships ("Pepsi," 2023). However, it is perhaps most notable its insane and constant rivalry with the Coca-Cola brand.

A well-known byproduct of this competition (because of the success of its social media presence) is the professional campaign "Halloween," which was launched in Belgium in October 2013 by an advertising firm called Buzz in a Box (*Pepsi: Halloween • ADS OF THE WORLD™*). Pepsi also shared this outdoor advertising effort on its Facebook and Twitter pages (*Coke vs. Pepsi: A scary Halloween ad campaign, 2014*), where it garnered much interest.

The text in the advertisement simply reads, "We wish you a scary Halloween!" below a can of Pepsi is wearing a red cape with the Coca-Cola logo. The purpose of the ad is to suggest that selecting a beverage from Coke is "scary" or "gross" and that Pepsi is preferred. This comedic shot at Coke further speaks to the conflict between the two brands and the competitive market.

This lighthearted acknowledgment of ongoing competition is clearly an effort to fit in with the meme culture of the 2010s. Another cunning detail that might go unnoticed is that Pepsi intentionally spelled Coca-Cola as Cola Coca on the cape to escape the legal ramifications of the letter swapping (2014).

We can infer from the product alone (soda) that the target market for this advertisement is soda drinkers acquainted with both brands. Additionally, because the ad appeared on both social media and in public ad form, there is a slightly broader audience. Street advertisements reach younger children, adolescents, and middle-aged adult consumers. Social media advertisements target social media platform users or people who are approximately 15 to 35 years old.

The purpose of the commercial is clear: to convince this audience to choose the Pepsi brand over Coke. The sarcastic tone of the advertisement makes the brand seem more approachable to a broader audience. The not-so-subtle message that reveals consumers' "deepest desires" adds to the humor by implying that while you might purchase Coke, all you truly desire is a Pepsi. It's terrifying to be a Coca-Cola devotee.

Many examples of visual rhetoric show clearly in the advertisement. For instance, in the long-running rivalry between the brands of Coke and Pepsi, many customers pick sides and support their favorites, just like with a sports team. In this advertisement, Pepsi is taking advantage of this by using the likeness of a competitor brand to engage consumers, get people chuckling, and start a light-hearted conversation with the facetious tone of the ad, using brand advocacy to make an inside joke with their customers.

The advertisement employs a very straightforward form of logical argument. The use of inductive logic can be spotted immediately in both the text that appears above the product and the actual product, using the idea that since drinking Coke is "scary," Coke must be worse than the beverage concealed beneath the costume (Pepsi). This straightforward reasoning effectively establishes a perceived ideal for soda and presents the notion that one brand is superior to the other.

The emotional appeal is also present but in different ways. First, we see the acknowledgment of the rivalry between the two companies, which plays to the audience's sense of humor. Making people laugh is a great way to appeal to their emotions and get people chuckling. Because humor is something people wish to share, the effectiveness of the ad is more widespread, reaching over 1 million people in less than 24 hours (Ads of the World, Facebook)

The advert's emotional appeal is also shown via the timing of the advert, the Halloween season release, and the holiday theme. The Halloween theme emotionally relates to viewers because of the joy and sentimentality the holiday brings. The nostalgia triggers positive reactions and fond memories of past Halloween adventures, further connecting emotionally to consumers.

While, no, it does not appear the most ethical choice to utilize the resemblance of a competing brand. A deeper inspection of the advert will soon point out the combination of not using the brand logo and title and pointing out the competitiveness of the brands in the first place makes the advert ethical.

For instance, instead of using general terms of "other brands" or "competitors," Pepsi takes a moral stance by being truthful in its work. In addition, as already mentioned, the deliberately misspelled "Cola Coca" on the costume is used to identify the brand while avoiding legal repercussions. Ethical choices show consumers that Pepsi is truthful and humorous, making the product more appealing.

The best part about this rhetorical strategy is how well the logical, emotional, and ethical concepts mesh together. For instance, the moral appeal (the words on the cape) can emotionally engage the audience by making it satisfying to figure out the detail that is the misspelled text. Using a particular competitor, a component of the ethical appeal, also works with the ad's logic because it uses two brands frequently pitted against one another, which implies that one is superior to the other. The logical appeal also works with emotion and ethics: the blatant manner in which inductive logic applies makes the advertisement more sarcastic and humorous, connecting it to the emotional appeal.

The way I see it, the ad was a brilliant attempt to increase brand advocacy. By appealing to viewers' emotions while making rational and moral decisions in the ad's design, the ad is more appealing. The advertisement's "meme quality" adds to its attractiveness and increases its effectiveness because people want to share the hilarity of it, which causes consumers to share the ad with more consumers, which generates free publicity for the company. The advertisement was significantly more successful because of the rhetorical decisions used in its creation.



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