

Sarah R. Baumgartner

Professor Mauk

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Here's to Crazy Ones: An Analysis of Apple's Think Different Campaign

In 1997, Apple Incorporated aired the one-minute "Crazy Ones" advertisement, a television commercial that was released as the beginning of the "Think Different" campaign. This campaign was assumed to be a response to IBM's "Think" slogan.

The advertisement showcases archival footage of 17 individuals - Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Richard Branson, John Lennon, Buckminster Fuller, Thomas Edison, Muhammad Ali, Ted Turner, Maria Callas, Mohandas Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock, Martha Graham, Jim Henson, Frank Lloyd Wright and Pablo Picasso. Over these various clips, and accompanied with simplistic inspirational music, Richard Dreyfuss provides the spoken text: "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." ("Think Different") At the fade out of the narration, footage, and music the words "Think Different" fade in with the Apple logo.

The genre is advertisement. Because Apple is not selling a new product or technology, rather an ideal that serves as one of the foundational standards of Apple, it can be more

specifically defined as a branding advertisement. However, the Apple logo does not appear until the last seconds of the advertisement. This editing structure allows for the sub-genre of a tribute to the various historical figures shown in the archival footage to surface. It is not apparent until the conclusion that the genre of advertisement is transgressed. Apple is not selling a new product to an audience in this ad, it sells the idea that daring to change the world, despite the resistance and push back one may receive, is “crazy”. This is the foundational idea that Apple credits to their success even today, and according to the video, made all the people shown in the video the successful figures they are/were. Aesthetically, because advertisement is a generally open-ended genre that can be created in many ways, this format, although not inappropriate, is unconventional and draws attention to the message being shared instead of a product. It does not utilize traditional product-sales language, but rather the building of a claim and the sharing of an idea.

Instead of using specific angling, positing, and high-end cinematography, this ad utilizes narration, instrumental music, and archival footage. The clips of these people are typically showcasing moments of joy, laughter, smiles or they are in action. Coupled with the narration, these are all people who are considered “crazy” because they changed the world in some way. The marriage of the uplifting music, the moments of positivity in the footage and the narration makes this ad rely heavily on pathetic appeal, specifically emotions like inspiration and motivation.

Apple establishes pathos by beginning with “here’s to the crazy ones…” and essentially listing 17 people who could be considered crazy due to their innovation, genius and ability to create change. This is the cause for emotion required in pathetic appeal. The conclusion statement is “...the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones

who do.” This statement is followed by the fade in of the words “Think Different” and the Apple logo. This is the action required for pathetic appeal – think differently – as if to say “*You* (the audience) could be one of these people if you think differently, push the status quo and dare to change the world.

The logos does not necessarily surface based upon the footage or music, but rather the narration. There is a line of reasoning in the way this famous quote was written. It begins by establishing *who* this ad is attributed to – “the crazy ones”. It follows with the characteristics these “crazy ones” have, “They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward.” It then concludes with the final sentence and final claim – those who are crazy to think they can change the world, do.

Ethos is established in the end when the Apple logo appears – until that point, based on what has been presented to a viewer in the form of narration, music and footage, it is unknown that this video is an Apple advertisement. Apple already had a reputation of being innovative and creating change – this ad showcases a foundational idea that makes Apple successful: “Think Different”.

This is not an “events” based advertisement, but rather a more cohesive, unified ad that comes together to form a single idea at the end – “think differently”. The production units are discernible visually and auditorily (i.e. narration, music and archival footage). They all begin together and end together (furthering the unification). The only thing that could change the way information is offered to the audience is the audience’s knowledge about the individuals shown in the video (Personally, I did not know every individual shown. Based on my personal context,

it shaped my interpretation). But, based on context, it can be assumed each person in the video is a person who “changed the world” somehow.

In order to draw attention to key words and phrases in their message, Apple relies heavily on repetitive form and structure. The more traditional sense is the repetition of the same word or words. This happens in small chunks like “...quote them...” “disagree with them” “...vilify them” “...ignore them...”. The common word here is “them”. Also “they push” and “they change”. The common word here is “they”.

Something unique to the narration early in the advertisement is the syllabic pattern utilized as a form of repetition. For example, “the-mis-fits”, “the-re-bels”, “the-round-pegs”, “the-square-holes”. The only common word between these sections is “the”, which in the context isn’t a significant word, however each section has a three-syllable pattern that is discernable and draws our attention to the words “misfits”, “rebels”, “round pegs”, “square holes”.

The advertisement builds the main claim with visual evidence (the individuals in the footage) and the use of presuppositions revolving around these “crazy” individuals who dared to change the world. The main claim, is “...the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.” By setting up the datum (or qualities) of these clearly successful people in history who’s words and actions have changed the world, the ad travels to this claim based on three key presuppositions. The first being there is something unique in people who create change, the second being in order to create change, one must not fear thinking outside the box, and the third being any actions or ideas that are unique or “outside the box” can be received negatively or positively by others. This list of presuppositions establishes that “crazy” could equally be considered as a negative word and a positive word. These historical

people were equally praised for their contribution (especially after significant time had passed) and ridiculed for what could be/was considered radical ideas and behaviors. Because of this argument structure and the main claim being stated at the very end of the ad, this ad utilizes climactic structure. The music and visuals maintain but the narration builds to the final – or climax – statement of “...the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

The figure of speech of sententia is described as a “...proverb-like declaration of an idea as if it were deep wisdom, fundamental truth, or traditional belief.” It includes “...setting up ideas that later arguments can build on, and stating enthymematic caps with an empathetic, impressive flourish, thereby giving them an impact that rings in the mind.” (cite pg 155) The declaration of arguable, fundamental truth is in this advertisement “...the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.” The reason this could be considered truth is because it is historically true – this is backed up by the subjects shown in the archival footage. All the people showcased are, now, considered geniuses and “changers” but in their time and culture were questioned, mocked, faced adversity and considered crazy. Additionally, this statement serves as the main enthymematic claim.

Mainly because this ad is only a minute long, clarity figures into the success of the message. The narration is very direct, concrete, and economic in word choice and pattern. The liveliness comes from the visual – the clips are high-energy, ranging from speech deliveries to concert clips to the subject smiling at the camera.

Today, Apple is a globally known corporation that experiments with various different forms of advertising. This success could be credited to their sense of stylistic decisions in telling their story. This advertisement from 1997 highlighted a foundation that Apple has built upon –

Dare to be crazy. Dare to change the world. Qualities like their choice of footage, repetition of important words or points and using an unconventional form of advertising presents this narrative. This narrative leaves the audience with a command, and maybe the first step to becoming like one of the individuals showcased in this video – Think Different.

Works Cited

“Think Different.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Apr. 2018,
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_different.