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November 30, 2023

### The Traps of the Consumer Market

Consumerism has become an integral part of society. Material goods and having more *things* have become a defining measure of success. In order to promote these products, companies first need to persuade the consumer to spend their hard-earned money on their goods. Oftentimes, these advertisements include dramatized language and seemingly credible sources to back up claims. In a mock press release from *The Onion*, the method by which products are marketed to consumers is satirized using several different literary devices to draw attention to the lengths businesses go to to convince potential customers to buy their products. The utilization of appeal to ethos and irony contributes to the manipulative strategies of how products are marketed in present-day society.

Appealing to ethos is a powerful tool many companies harness to add credibility and value to their products. From the beginning, this article opens by featuring Dr. Arthur Bluni's esteemed review on the revolutionary impact of MagnaSoles, describing it as "not just a shoe insert...[but] a total foot-rejuvenation system." Throughout the article, several direct quotes are incorporated from the "pseudoscientists" who engineered this revolutionary device to testimonies from everyday folks whose lives have been transformed. Any everyday person is likely to become awe-struck by a product capable of converting "the wearer's energy to match the Earth's natural vibrational rate of 32,805 kilofrankels." The impressive statistics and the jargon used to describe the product further build the ethos, indicating the intellectuality and sophistication of this innovation. The strategies harnessed to develop the ethos shed light on how marketers today leverage celebrities and prestige to make more products seem more glorious than they actually may be. Although the appeal to ethos paints the MagnaSoles as a revolutionary device, when closely examined, there are several logical fallacies and pitfalls in the argument.

Along with the use of ethos to build the credibility of their product to influence customers to purchase them, this satire frequently uses the technique of irony to highlight issues in the way companies market their products. Firstly, the article begins by introducing that the MagnaSoles uses "no fewer than

five forms of pseudoscience.” The term “pseudoscience” can be defined as information that is presented as scientific but is not backed by any scientific data or research. This section is an example of irony because the article is justifying the device with the fact that it is “backed by pseudoscience” when pseudoscience is, in itself, information meant to seem credible but is not scientifically backed. This is meant to reference how companies often use evidence that would fall into this category of pseudoscience to justify their products and convince their customers that their products are more credible than they may be. As briefly reviewed in the previous paragraph, the article further emphasizes this irony with the use of quotes from “pseudoscientists” justifying the product. Many of these quotes include terms that are amalgamations of two or more other scientific terms, such as “vibrational biofeedback,” “kilofrankels,” and “pain-nuclei.” These terms may seem scientific to a consumer reading who may not know the technical jargon of the field. This ironically highlights how companies often do a similar process in order to take advantage of consumers’ lack of knowledge on a subject to convince them that their information is credible.

Consumers often purchase a product with the implication that it will satisfy a need or want. Oftentimes, these needs or wants are health-related -- or more specifically for pain relief. In a large proportion of advertisements, testimony from those who have used the product is used to convey how effective the product is in satisfying a need or relieving pain. These testimonies often contain mention of a customer who was once in pain, but after using said product, they are no longer in pain. In this satire, the customers who share their testimonies in advertisements are exaggerated through the use of hyperbole, amplifying one or a few unique features of the product that may have supposedly transformed their lives. However, customers tend to fall for such traps, glazing over the subtle yet important logical fallacy in the justification of the product. For example, in this article, Helene Kuhn Edison of New Jersey remarked on the transformative impact the MagnaSoles had in just seven weeks. However, it was previously stated that it has been only one week since the release of this product. Although this simple logical fallacy may be ignored by some, it speaks greatly about the manipulative strategies used by marketers. While testimonies from customers may strengthen a product’s image, the reviews can often be absurd.

Advertisement is a powerful tool. This article sheds light on the manipulative strategies used by marketers to misrepresent facts and dramatize the extent to which their product is effective. As consumers, we must do our due diligence before spending money on products based on the advertisement alone. Before buying a good or service, every consumer should ask themselves, “Does this ad seem reasonable?”