

Buying for Love of Country: Assessing the Ethics of Patriotic Appeals in Advertising

JAMES M. STEARNS, SHAHEEN BORNA, AND GILLIAN OAKENFULL

The terrorist attacks of September 11 and the war in Iraq have stirred the patriotic emotions of Americans. Throughout history, citizens' reactions to such national events have ranged from victory gardens and purchasing war bonds to a willingness to pay the ultimate price to defend or promote the country of their birth or adoption. Advertisers have a long history of monitoring public sentiment to improve creative strategies with an eye toward differentiating brands and altering customer loyalties. It is understandable, then, that marketers, primarily through advertising appeals, would want to take advantage of any rise in patriotic emotions.¹ Take, for example, the General Motors television advertisement that ran in October 2001. The view of a desert highway is accompanied by a voice-over by Peter Coyote: "The American dream. We refuse to let anyone take it away. So, GM announces interest-free financing. On every new car. And every new truck. Now through October 31. Believe in the dream. Believe in each other. Keep America rolling."²

The frequency and boldness of patriotism as an appeal in promotion logically corresponds to major national events—natural or

James M. Stearns is Professor and Chair of the Department of Marketing at Miami University. Shaheen Borna is Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing and Management, Miller College of Business, Ball State University. Gillian Oakenfull is Assistant Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing at Miami University.

man-made. Recent examples range from Mayor Giuliani's plea for Americans to visit New York City (and spend money) after September 11 and increased use of "Made-in-the-USA" or "Proudly-made-in-the-USA" to stirring patriotic appeals and references similar to the General Motors advertising copy. These tactics imply that buying behavior has an element of patriotism in it, that certain types of consumption are patriotic, or that patriotic emotions unrelated to potential purchases can stimulate consumer behavior.

Post-September 11 patriotic advertising appeals caused a major reaction in the popular and academic advertising press. Criticisms of patriotic advertising appeals overwhelmed praise.³ Critics' arguments were themselves emotional and anecdotal, citing sappy appeals, bad taste, cynical opportunism, and waving the flag for profit. The question, then, is when is such use of patriotic appeals unethical and can a systematic standard be established? Are there certain types of appeals and timing of appeals that cross the line of exploitation and, therefore, ethics? Can guidelines be developed, based upon ethics theory, to help marketers and advertisers better understand the appropriateness of their own actions related to the use of patriotism? Are there "good" or ethical patriotic appeals and "bad" or unethical patriotic appeals and, if so, when is that line crossed?

To answer these questions, the rich literature on the phenomenon of patriotism must be examined and some categories of appropriate and inappropriate use of patriotic appeals identified. Although many pundits were critical of the spate of patriotism in advertising after September 11, none tied those criticisms to the social psychology of patriotism and theories of business ethics. To that end, this article 1) derives "levels" of patriotism from patriotism theory and social psychology; 2) reviews how major ethical theories would judge appeals to extreme patriotism; and 3) derives ethical standards for the assessment of advertising appeals timed to coincide with periods of, or based upon, a rise in extreme patriotism.

THE MEANING AND OBJECT OF PATRIOTIC EMOTIONS

The word patriotism is derived from the Greek "patriotes," or fatherland. In general, patriotism refers to the positive sentiments and loyalty one feels to a country. For Doob, patriotism is "more or less conscious conviction of a person that his own welfare and that of the

significant groups to which he belongs are dependent upon the preservation or expansion (or both) of the power and culture of his society."⁴ During national emergencies, tragedies, crises, or wars, patriotism often has a mawkish and romantic feel. For example, Rousseau describes patriotism as that "fine and lively feeling which gives the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, and lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions."⁵

Patriotism implies love of and devotion to a nation or state. For Renan, "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle," a form of "morality conscience."⁶ For Stalin, a nation had both subjective and objective elements: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."⁷ Giddens offers a more objective or statist view of a nation: "A nation . . . only exists when a state has unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed."⁸

Globalism and freer movement of people and labor have, to some extent, confounded patriotism and the object of patriotic emotions. For example, Iranian-Americans may be devoted to Saudi Arabia (or part of it) by their religion, to Iran by their nationality, and to the United States by their citizenship. Notwithstanding these confounding and confusing 21st-century elements of nations, states, and patriotism, the most complete understanding and conception of the object of patriotism is similar to that of Giddens—a nation-state with recognizable boundaries unified by *some* cultural commonalities and recognized legally. In other words, even in the 21st century, patriotic emotions are directed toward a legal entity (a country) and a flag.

LEVELS OF PATRIOTISM

As the above definitions imply, the literature on patriotism identifies and acknowledges different levels of country-directed or nation-directed emotions. The most overly emotional level is "extreme patriotism." Extreme patriotism implies "my country right or wrong," as in Decatur's: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."⁹ Extreme patriotism also includes an air of superiority epitomized in the old German national anthem: "Deutschland, Deutschland,

über alles” (“Germany, Germany, *above all*”), and in Tolstoy’s description: “The sentiment is merely the preference of one’s own country or nation above the country or nation of any one else.”¹⁰ Recent survey evidence suggests that extreme patriotism may be at its highest point since World War II.¹¹

A middle or moderate form of patriotism is characterized by a concern and willingness to act on one’s country’s behalf, but only in situations where the citizen believes the country is acting within the limits of morality. Nathanson argues that “moderate” patriots also are concerned with “the legitimate needs and interests of other nations and their nationals.”¹² This form of patriotism obviously implies that citizens’ patriotism and, more important, their willingness to act, will vary considerably from situation to situation and from person to person.

While extreme patriotism anchors one end of a “feeling toward country” continuum, universalist philosophy is the opposite approach or, perhaps, the anchor for the other end. Universalism means no countries at all or all belong to one country. Traditional universalism presupposes that common traits shared by all show why human beings should organize themselves into a cosmopolis. According to Nathanson:

Universalists are committed to the equal worth of all human beings and to equal activity on behalf of all people. Universalists might feel special affection for their own country and special identification with it simply because it is the place where they have grown up. Nonetheless, they would not feel any special concern for its well-being since they regard national boundaries and other differentiations among people as arbitrary. Hence they would be committed to acting on behalf of all people and would not primarily be concerned with people of their own nation. Universalists would only act on behalf of their own country if it had, so to speak, the best case, i.e. the greatest need or the most pressing rights, or if it were the only country that they were in a position to assist.¹³

ETHICS THEORY AND PATRIOTIC APPEALS

Theories of ethics provide guidelines for what is and what is not appropriate. The most commonly applied theories in business and

public policy decision-making are based upon deontological and utilitarian thinking.¹⁴ Virtue ethics and universalism also have made recent contributions to business and public policy administration.¹⁵ Each approach offers insight into the appropriateness of the timing of patriotic appeals and the use of appeals based upon extreme patriotism as elements of promotion strategy.

Deontological Arguments

The rule-based ethical theories of Ross, Rawls, and Kant¹⁶ argue that consequences of actions are less important in a world of duty and moral obligation. Embedded in most deontological thinking is an acute concern for the least advantaged. One could not imagine Kant arguing that the “least advantaged” refers only to those in one’s own country. Any models of behavior that included “my country, right or **wrong**,” or “*über alles*” are *prima facie* unethical viewed through the traditional Kantian deontological lens.

A discussion of deontological models and ethical issues in public policy, advertising, and business must also include distributive justice. Distributive justice relates to how the rewards of a society are made available to citizens. Rawls argued that certain principles must guide decisions related to primary goods (things that every rational person is presumed to want). Although Rawls never specified the level of aggregation for a “society,” his guiding principles give clues as to how he would view extreme patriotism. A Rawlsian just social structure would be one in which: 1) “Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all”; and 2) “Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality open to all.”¹⁷ Undoubtedly, Rawls’s envisioned relevant aggregation was at the country, state, or even municipality/community level, but given his concern for the individual and the least advantaged, it is hard to imagine that his distributive justice would place more value on one society “*über alles*” or if it is “wrong.”

The most compelling deontological argument is Rawls’s *veil of ignorance*: what policy would participants in a social contract advocate if they did not know how they would fare or their station in the

world under the principles they agree to as part of the social contract? The veil asks decision-makers to construct policy and strategy with equal regard for the least advantaged or as if they might *be* the least advantaged. “This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances.”¹⁸ Obviously this criterion contradicts any form of “*über alles*.”

Utilitarian Arguments

The teleological or consequentialists’ utilitarian argument would be that decisions should be made such that they provide the greatest good for the greatest number. Utilitarians might argue that the greatest good for the greatest number can be achieved when one country is dominant, and, therefore, appeals to extreme patriotism are ethical and efficacious in a utilitarian sense. Indeed this was the basis for most imperialism throughout history. Others, however, argue that given the global economy and the shrinking world, the most desirable end-state would be one where *all* societies are flourishing, not one or a few at the expense of others. Individual countries are now in a position to initiate policies that will benefit all in the long run, for their own benefit if no other justification can be found. Again, “*über alles*” seems an anathema to long-run utilitarian views, or at best a self-defeating, short-run utilitarian approach.

Virtue Arguments

A currently popular business ethics ideal comes from virtue ethics. One of the bases for virtue ethics is that other ethical theories (rule-based, utilitarian) address quandaries or dilemmas and represent little more than baselines for minimum action. Moreover, the baselines vary depending upon the approach applied with each theory providing rationalizations for different actions in a given situation. The commonly applied ethical theories may *help* guide in difficult decision-making situations, but they do not move the decision-maker toward any higher level ideals.

Virtue ethicists argue that individuals make decisions “in ways consistent with the community or cultural ideals that have influenced and nurtured them for a lifetime.”¹⁹ The higher those ideals or virtues are, the better the decisions. Societies (or countries)

then must cultivate virtues that bring about resolutions that are for the “good of the whole” in the Aristotelian sense—virtues must contribute to something. The chain then consists of virtuous individuals making virtuous communities, which in turn make larger virtuous political communities, which in turn leads to a more virtuous world, which then leads to a better life for all.

An argument might be that loyalty is a virtue and therefore extreme patriotism is a manifestation of the virtue of loyalty. The problem with that argument is that virtues, by definition, lead to the good of the whole. Unless the whole is defined as a country and one could demonstrate that “*über alles*” would lead to a better “whole” (country) in the long run (in other words a utilitarian thesis), this argument comes up short. Virtue ethicists would counter that the rising tide of virtues should raise *all* in the long run and that no individual country could optimize in the long run in a world of “*über alles*.”

Aristotle’s “*eudaimonia*,” the end-state of virtues, is loosely defined as the state of “flourishing” or “doing well.”²⁰ Again, one can only reach the optimum “*eudaimonia*” if all flourish or, at least, have the opportunity to flourish. Any ideals (such as extreme patriotism) that prevent that opportunity are shortsighted and self-defeating. Therefore, applying the virtue ethics criterion, extreme patriotism is shortsighted, self-defeating, and unethical.

Universalist Arguments

Some would argue that any use of patriotic appeals is unethical because such appeals must be, by definition, based upon an immoral emotion. Nathanson referring to Tolstoy makes the case:

[Patriotism] focuses on promoting the national good, no matter what effects on persons in other countries might be. Even in its milder forms, it calls for special forms of attention to members of our own nation. In effect, patriotism rejects the moral egalitarianism and universalism that play so central a role in moral thought. Patriotism, Tolstoy argues, is incompatible with the fundamental nature of morality and hence must be condemned by any person who aspires to live a moral life.²¹

Gomberg also argues that *any* level of patriotism short of universalism is immoral. Patriotism by definition means a preference for one’s country over others and is, therefore, *discriminatory*.

Although Gomberg acknowledges that countries can provide desirable social norms that bind people together, he does not believe that countries can ever be the means to make desirable social norms universal because any form of discrimination is immoral and country preference, by definition, is then discriminatory. Gomberg, responding to the argument that countries are an intermediate step to a more moral and universal world:

Hence universal principles can be realized only through relationships that require preferential treatment. I have no quarrel with this general conclusion. But are nation-states and patriotic culture—a culture of preference for one's compatriots and country—among the institutions that in fact realize universal principles? I have argued that there are substantial reasons to doubt this. . . . [A] genuine universalism is possible, but only as a result of a struggle against patriotism and nationalism.²²

Universalism takes a strong stand concerning the unethical nature of extreme patriotism. The idealistic universalist arguments are, however, less convincing vis-à-vis moderate patriotism or appeals based on or targeted to that more reasonable and common emotion.

Virtue and universalism are the most idealistic and utopian of the ethical theories. That is both their weakness and their strength. Critics will say those theories are naïve and impractical. Supporters will say anything less is fool's gold. One thing is certain: it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine virtue ethics and universalism resulting in an argument in support of extreme patriotism, and, therefore, the condoning and use of extreme patriotism as an appeal in marketing efforts.

PATRIOTIC APPEALS IN ADVERTISING—WHEN IS THE LINE CROSSED?

The argument made here is that advertising appeals using *extreme* patriotism are tapping into an immoral emotion and, therefore, are unethical. More moderate patriotism or patriotic appeals that are not solely timed to take advantage of or exploit periods of extreme patriotism or post-trauma emotions (e.g., immediate post-September 11) are acceptable.

Constructing a hard and fast line over which advertisers should not cross is impossible. Clearly, however, some recent advertisements have attempted to take advantage of national events and the rise in extreme patriotism. Post-September 11 corporate “patriotic” promotion seemed to fall into two categories: 1) advertisements that used emotional appeals to rally the country, but were paid for and/or sponsored by corporations; and 2) ads that attempted to exploit emotions, played on fears, took advantage of the rise in extreme patriotism, and/or implied that selective consumption was “patriotic.”

Take, for example, the General Motors advertisement described above and the case of a local print advertisement that both appeared shortly after September 11, 2001. In the local print advertisement for “Creative Mirror Designs,” two American flags bracketed the headline “Creative Mirror is Cutting Prices, NOT Jobs! Invest in your Home and America.” A subheading at the bottom of the ad reads: “HURRY! There will never be a better time to buy!” Although the General Motors and Creative Mirror Designs advertisements appear to be very different—one is television and national, the other print and local—we believe both cross the ethics line for at least two reasons. First, the timing of the advertisements plays on economic fears and emotions and the advertisements appear to be direct appeals to and exploitations of the rise in post-September 11 extreme patriotism and patriotic feelings and emotions. Second, and worse, both imply buying a car or mirror or glass door is, if not a patriotic duty, at least a patriotic act. The fact is, even if maintenance of consumption were desirable in a macroeconomic sense after September 11, these purchases may not have been the optimum “patriotic” use for discretionary consumption dollars. We argue that if “patriotic spending” were necessary and desirable at that time, the most useful spending (or donating) would be a public policy issue and best left in the hands of public policy makers and economists, not individual marketers trying to take advantage of a rise in patriotic emotions. At best, then, the advertisements are misleading, at worst they are exploitive and deceptive and, therefore, unethical.

Another local advertisement for World Gym Fitness Centers may cross the line for a more subtle reason. The advertisement offers 50% off new memberships and features a large American flag under the headline “We’re Doing What We Can To Keep America Strong!” If this ad were merely a clever play-on-words and did not appear

shortly after September 11th, few could find fault. The flag is normally a relatively innocent attention attracter, and there is some humor in a *fitness center* encouraging people “To Keep America Strong.” The argument here, however, is that this is a blatant attempt to exploit and appeal to post-September 11 emotions. The World Gym appeal clearly is not as obvious as General Motors or Creative Mirror Designs. The issue, however, is not the advertisement per se, but the timing of the advertisement to coincide with a rise in extreme patriotism. A common deontological test in ethical dilemmas is whether one could defend making the decision the same way in all similar situations. The salient point is that the patriotic, although humorous, appeal trivializes a history-making and history-changing tragedy and atrocity. Would we want an advertising culture where it was commonplace to exploit such events? If the answer is “no,” as it surely is in this situation, then decision makers have a standard for acceptable practice. Symbols and appeals should not be timed to exploit the rise in extreme patriotism that accompanies an event such as September 11.

A different category of advertisement also was common after September 11 and, to a lesser extent, after the Iraqi War. Companies would use what marketing theorists label “institutional advertisements” to either rally emotions or assuage fears. These advertisements made the sponsoring company apparent and *did* play on post-September 11 emotions, but *did not* push a specific product or even brand. For example, AT&T Wireless used a Manhattan billboard to proclaim “You Do Us Proud New York, New York” over an apple-shaped American flag. Similarly, Kmart Corporation ran a full page American flag in the Sunday editions of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* with no other copy or references.

This category is more difficult to judge because the intent of the advertiser is more difficult to discern. AT&T Wireless seems merely to be offering encouragement in difficult times. Kmart, although obviously appealing to patriotism, made little or no effort to link the effort to the company’s stores. Although some benefit may accrue to the companies in an “institutional” sense, the appeals obviously are not targeting behavior based on the extreme patriotism emotion or timing. Also, because there is no reference or appeal to consumption as a patriotic act, and socially beneficial outcomes result or possibly result, we do not believe and could find no support from ethics’ theory that these advertisements cross the ethical line. Of

course, intent is difficult to detect, but, *prima facie*, advertisements like those of AT&T Wireless and Kmart appear to have loftier goals: respectful remembrance, assuaging fears, helping citizens to deal with difficult times.

CONCLUSION

The intent of this article is to raise ethical issues and apply ethics theory to advertising in one of the more emotional and patriotic periods in American history. We believe the exploitation of post-trauma patriotic emotions may violate ethical advertising practice for three reasons. First, such appeals are based on what almost all ethicists consider an immoral emotion—extreme patriotism. Any appeal based upon an attitude or emotion of superiority/discrimination (“*über alles*”) or immorality (“*my country right or wrong*”), must be identified, challenged, and discouraged.

Second, the use of patriotic emotions unrelated to purchase in national post-emergency or post-trauma situations is exploitive. This judgment applies to the situation where the explicit use of the patriotic appeal is timed to take advantage of a rise in patriotic emotions. The judgment usually does not apply to “institutional advertisements.” Obviously intent is difficult to judge (and regulate). The standard for institutional advertisements must be posed and applied by advertisers themselves; we believe intent is a sound guideline in such cases, but requires advertisers to be honest in their self-assessments.

Third, some advertisers argue that consumption at certain times can be good for a country and, therefore, patriotic. If that premise is accepted, then public policymakers and economists, not individual marketers, should decide what categories of consumption meet societal needs. Exploitation of events by advertisers touting buying their brand *to be patriotic* should be discouraged. Such tactics are more effective and, therefore, more tempting to advertisers in periods where extreme patriotism is high. If fear reduction and apprehension, in general, is desirable economically to increase consumption, then those emotions should be the targets of advertisements, not selective consumption.

Advertisers often are faced with difficult decisions about when the ethical line is crossed. For example, the debate over deception in

advertising has raged for decades and will never completely disappear.²³ Appeals to emotions in emotional times give advertising ethicists new challenges. The purpose herein is to raise salient issues and provide a basis for evaluating advertisements using patriotic appeals in post-trauma periods. The debate and discussion should be based upon solid understandings of the concepts of patriotism, advertising, and business ethics theory. We hope that the intersection of these three areas will shed new light on what is appropriate and inappropriate contemporary advertising practice.

NOTES

1. J. Scott, "The Meaning of Patriotism Is a Moving Target," *New York Times News Service*, July 14, 2003.

2. G. Raine, "Advertisers Waving the Flag to Boost Sales," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 2001.

3. See A. Nucifora, "Appeal to Patriotism Is Dangerous Ground for Marketers," *Washington Business Journal*, April 14, 2003; J. Ghosh, "Consumerism as Patriotism," *Frontline* 19(11) (2002); J. Barlow, "Hurray for Red, White and Blue if It Sells Product," *HoustonChronicle.com*, June 3, 2002; S. Jarvis, "Red, White, and Blues," *Marketing News* 36(11) (2002), 1-2; B. D. Gelb, "'Market Patriotism': Advertising Dilemma," *Journal of Advertising Research* (January-February 2002), 67-69; D. Brady, "Patriotic Ads—and Minuses," *Business Week Online*, November 8, 2001.

4. L. W. Doob, *Patriotism and Nationalism: Their Psychological Foundations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964).

5. As cited in F. M. Barnard, "Patriotism and Citizenship in Rousseau: A Dual Theory of Public Willing?" *The Review of Politics* 46(2) (1984), 244-65.

6. As cited in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 16.

7. J. Stalin, *The Essential Stalin, Major Theoretical Writings, 1905-1952*, ed. Bruce Franklin (New York: Anchor Books, 1972).

8. A. Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

9. *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

10. L. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy's Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence* (New York: Bergman, 1967).

11. See Scott, "The Meaning of Patriotism Is a Moving Target."
12. S. Nathanson, *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993).
13. Ibid.
14. J. R. Boatright, *Ethics and the Conduct of Business* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000); D. M. Borchert and D. Stewart, *Exploring Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1986); J. M. Stearns, J. R. Walton, C. T. Crespy, and J. W. Bol, "The Role of Moral Obligations to Stakeholders in Ethical Decision Making," *Journal of Marketing Management* 6(2) (1996), 34–47; J. W. Walton, J. M. Stearns, and C. T. Crespy, "Integrating Ethics into Public Administration: A Three-Step Process," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 16(3) (1997), 470–83.
15. Nathanson, *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace*; J. McCracken, W. Martin, and B. Shaw, "Virtue Ethics and the Parable of the Sadhu," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17 (1998), 25–38.
16. W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930); J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); I. Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. L. W. Beck (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).
17. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 250.
18. J. Rawls as cited in D. M. Borchert and D. Stewart, *Exploring Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 309.
19. McCracken et al., "Virtue Ethics and the Parable of the Sadhu."
20. Ibid., 27.
21. Nathanson, *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace*.
22. P. Gomberg, "Patriotism Is Like Racism," *Ethics* 101(1) (1990), 144–50.
23. See, e.g., D. Cohen, "The Concept of Unfairness as It Relates to Advertising," *Journal of Marketing* 38(3) (1974), 8–13; D. Gardner, "Deception in Advertising: A Conceptual Approach," *Journal of Marketing* 39(1) (1975), 40–46; A. C. Michalos, "Advertising: Its Logic, Ethics, and Economics," in *Business Ethics in Canada*, ed. D. C. Poff and W. Waluchow (Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 455–68.

Copyright of *Business & Society Review* (1974) is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Request PDF | On Nov 14, 2003, James M. Stearns and others published *Buying for Love of Country: Assessing the Ethics of Patriotic Appeals in Advertising* | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Patriotic marketing appeals also risk becoming unethical once they begin to imply that a particular form of consumption is, of itself, a patriotic act (Stearns, Borna and Oakenfull, 2003). More recently there was an upsurge in marketing activity intended to capitalise on the upsurge in American patriotic sentiment that arose in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Researching the unselfish consumer. Article. Advertising is in constant development, and the language of advertising is adapting on an ongoing basis. Linguists all over the world have attempted to classify and analyse speech strategies used to create the most persuasive advertising text. Regardless of the advertising medium, its aim is to encourage people to 'buy'. Over the years, scholars have. 1. INTRODUCTION. world. Usually, the people involved in advertising discourse are advertisers (agents creating the advertising text) and the target audience (recipients of the advertising message). Advertising texts normally use diverse functional styles - both colloquial (informal) and business (formal) - and often deploy professional terms and professional jargon. Ethos calls upon the ethics, or what we'd call the values, of the speaker. Pathos elicits emotions in the audience. Finally, logos puts logic into play by using evidence and facts. Ethos is the persuasive technique that appeals to an audience by highlighting credibility. Ethos advertisement techniques invoke the superior "character" of a speaker, presenter, writer, or brand. Ethos examples aim to convince the audience that the advertiser is reliable and ethical. It's easier to make a decision when someone you respect signs off on it, right? This is broadly the function of ethos in commercials. Of the types of persuasive techniques in advertising, ethos is best used to unlock trust. Use of ethos in advertising. How is ethos used in advertising? So what does ethos mean?