

Editor's Note

Collin Tateishi's "Selling Your Lip for a Taste of Freedom" offers a rhetorical analysis of a Skoal® Smokeless Tobacco advertisement. Tateishi purposefully uses second-person, direct-address to appeal to the reader and model the methods of advertisers. When he writes, "By purchasing this product, you are freeing yourself of the monotonous burdens that have plagued your current lifestyle," how do you respond? Is the tone conversational, moralistic, engaging? While Tateishi relies on both *pathos* and *ethos* to appeal to his reader, can you recognize appeals to reason and logic as well? Consider Tateishi's command of language. He uses active verbs such as "welcomes," "horse-shoed," and "symbolizes." Do these verbs give the essay energy and, in turn, paint a more vivid picture in your mind?

Though Tateishi's response is brief, he delves deeply into the content and meaning(s) of the advertisement. What is the difference between summary and analysis? Locate moments where the writer shifts between these two modes to give a fully developed response. For example, the statement, "Color is a major contributor to the ad's devious message," is an analytic claim. Overall, how does Tateishi organize the essay? Lastly, notice the conclusion, especially the last line. It is somewhat unsettling and lingers in our minds; Tateishi places the responsibility of being discerning readers of advertisements back on his readers.

Selling Your Lip for a Taste of Freedom

Collin Tateishi

“Welcome to the brotherhood.” Skoal® Smokeless Tobacco welcomes YOU—the helpless male consumer to their family of swanky, suave Matthew McConaughey clones. By purchasing this product, you are freeing yourself of the monotonous burdens that have plagued your current lifestyle. You will no longer be the average, single male who is neglected by women. With that juicy pinch of smokeless tobacco horse-shoed against your lower lip, you're irresistible. At least, that's what the Skoal® advertisement team is determined to convince you with their combination of *pathos* and *ethos*.

This advertisement taken from *Maxim* magazine is based entirely on *pathos*. What immediately jumps off the page and keeps your anxious index finger from sliding to the next page is the glorified, centered image of two young men (middle to late twenties) sporting powder blue button-up shirts, enjoying a night at the strip club. The consumer sees these men between the long, sexy, fishnet stocking covered legs

of a stripper atop a glistening wooden table in ruby red heels. The man on the right, laughing in joy while holding what appears to be a glass of rum and coke, is leaning against his friend. With three dollar bills slipped between his fingers, the friend is gazing beyond the stripper's crimson garter belt at her womanly assets. His eyes are overflowing with the look of "SEX!" Now if that's not an emotionally driven advertisement, I don't know what is.

Color is a major contributor to the ad's devious message. Red, the color that covers eighty percent of the page, is an excellent attention grabber. It symbolizes power (the red carpet for celebrities and Very Important Persons) and is also associated with courage and promiscuity. The soft and sensual blues from the men's shirts contrast well with the bold red to reach a respective medium.

"What was the best dip of your life?" . . . "At my buddy's Vegas bachelor party." . . . "Why?" . . . "Who's asking?" This documented conversation is listed at the top of the page in two different fonts: questions in legible red and responses in handwritten black. The reference to the bachelor party in Vegas is important because of the ideology and freedom that is associated with the city: exotic and provocative. The advertisers even go as far as including a spinoff on the Las Vegas slogan, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas." When you dip with Skoal® "Every dip tells a story. And this one ain't talkin'."

Skoal® also incorporates *ethos* into their ad by including two silver warning stamps in the lower corners of the page. The stamp to the left states: "WARNING: this product may cause mouth cancer." Found in the opposite corner is: "U.S.A Smokeless Tobacco CO. reminds you, not for sale to minors." Who in their right mind would be drawn to purchase a product that righteously admits to oral cancer? Is the prominent "sexual appeal" truly that convincing? Required trademarks and warnings aside, it is obvious that Skoal®, a highly credible corporation that conducts itself in a professional manner, is more than willing to provide you, the consumer, with their magnificent gum decimating product.

As consumers it is imperative that we ask ourselves, "Am I really not enough without this product?" The educated advertisement analyzer would respond with "YES. Of course I am." However, the culture that we have begun to embrace believes otherwise. And in that sense, have a seat and take a pinch—the brotherhood welcomes you.

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