

# Evaluation of an Ad

**INTRODUCTION**

Attention getter

Description of the ad

Marketing purpose and strategy

Target audience

Thesis statement

**BODY**

First criterion: repetition

Evidence for repetition

**Think Different, but Not Too Different**

“You aren’t like everyone else. You’re intelligent, well read, and politically aware. You are a creative individual with the potential to change the world, and our computers are as clever as you are.” All of these statements are part of the implicit message of an enormous, yet very simple, billboard ad from Apple Computer, Inc. This ad features a large black-and-white image of the Indian political leader Mohandas Gandhi alongside the Apple logo, a multicolored apple with one bite taken from its side, and the phrase “Think different.” The ad is part of a larger campaign designed to promote Apple’s entire product line; it targets an audience of highly educated people who admire creativity and ingenuity, and who aspire to do something beyond the ordinary. The ad is very effective in persuading its audience that Apple products can help them stand out from the crowd; however, it really doesn’t urge people to be different. Rather, this ad encourages its audience to conform to a specific group—the group of people that uses Apple computers.

A major factor in this ad’s effectiveness is its use of repetition. Advertisers use repetition to saturate a target audience with ads that follow a specific theme. In Apple’s global “Think different” campaign, the command “Think different” appears alongside photographs of a number of well-known figures, including Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Rosa Parks, Pablo Picasso, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The campaign includes ads on television, in magazines, on billboards, and even on buses. The

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

### Evidence for repetition

wide variety of figures featured on these ads helps capture the busy viewer's attention again and again, and allows each ad to reinforce the campaign's slogan.

While the "Think different" ads sometimes seem to appear everywhere, Gandhi is one of the figures that most commonly appears in the campaign. Indeed, Gandhi's ubiquity is such that he sometimes seems to have become a second logo for the company. The "Think different" television commercial, which shows images of Gandhi along with several other historical figures, was awarded an Emmy in the Outstanding Commercial category. Apple also used the "Think different" theme to create holiday e-cards featuring images from different ads. Gandhi's photo appeared on one of the e-cards along with the message "Peace." The billboard featuring Gandhi probably would not be so effective without the comfort and familiarity brought on by its constant presence. It is the repetition of his image throughout the campaign that makes this ad work.

### Second criterion: composition

### Evidence for composition

Like the other ads in Apple's campaign, this ad also uses a carefully executed composition to communicate its message. The composition of an ad is the way in which it combines language with images and with other visual elements in order to create a specific message or general feeling. The "Think different" ad featuring Mohandas Gandhi uses language and images that work together to suggest that Apple computers are made for extraordinary people.

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

### Evidence for composition

The slogan "Think different" is the only text that appears on the billboard, and sends the message that great achievers are rebels who don't follow the crowd. The absence of any additional sales pitch or fine print makes the ad stand out from its competitors, just as independent thinkers do. Even the grammatical awkwardness of the phrase "Think different" might be intended to suggest that great thinkers don't mind breaking the rules.

The ad's message is also communicated through the way in which its visual composition leads viewers' eyes through the ad. The line in the lower left corner of the ad points upward, directing viewers' eyes first toward Gandhi's head; then, it points to the Apple logo in the top right corner; and finally it ends in the "Think different" slogan just beneath the logo. This visual pathway can be seen to subtly reinforce several different aspects of the ad's message. The fact that the line points to Gandhi's head emphasizes his status as a great thinker. As the viewers' eyes move to the round Apple logo, the line forms an exclamation point, which could remind viewers that great thinking is the result of using Apple computers. Finally, by leading viewers to the command "Think different," the ad leaves its audience thinking of the global campaign's slogan. It's difficult to say whether the ad's designers intended to include any of these subtle messages. Whether intentional or not, however, the way in which this ad's elements are arranged helps communicate the message that achievers like Gandhi, unique ways of

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

Third criterion:  
association

Evidence for  
association

Evidence for  
association

thinking, and Apple computers are all closely related.

Another technique this advertisement uses is association.

Association involves linking a product with something else that will appeal to the target audience, such as a person, an idea, a place, or a symbol. The ad featuring Gandhi uses two association techniques: transfer and nostalgia.

Transfer is a persuasive technique that links the product being advertised to the positive values associated with a well-known person, place, object, or event. The ad featuring Mohandas Gandhi transfers the positive values of this highly respected thinker and human rights leader to Apple computers. By placing Gandhi's image alongside the Apple logo, the ad makes a strong appeal to the dreams of ordinary people, implying that they too can overcome adversity, and harness their creativity to produce historic work—if they use Apple computers. In addition, the advertisers seem to hope that their audience will come to associate the compassion, courage, and respect for human decency shown by Mohandas Gandhi with the values of Apple Computer, Inc.

The ad uses a second type of association by appealing, in an odd way, to the audience's sense of nostalgia. This technique associates a product with the audience's ideal of the past—the "good old days." In today's fast-paced, computerized world, people often idealize the past as a time when life was more simple. In this ad, Gandhi's spare clothes and calm demeanor, as well as the bare floor of the room he is

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

Fourth and fifth  
criteria: omission and  
diversion

Evidence for omission

Evidence for diversion

meditating in, all suggest a more peaceful, more simple time. In reality, India during Gandhi's lifetime was torn by political strife; this period was far from being the "good old days." However, this ad testifies to the power of an image to evoke positive feelings, whatever the reality behind the image might be.

This ad also persuades its audience by omitting possibly negative information about the company and diverting the audience's attention from issues that might complicate its intended message. By presenting only two words and a logo, this ad provides no concrete information of any kind about Apple's product line, or about the ways in which Apple's computers compare with their competitors'. Some of the most important selling points for computers are cost, performance, ease of use, availability of software and support, and brand image. There is heated disagreement among computer users about whether Apple personal computers top their competitors in any or all of these categories, and they are generally conceded to be more expensive than other personal computers. The "Think different" ad fails to include information about any of these criteria. Instead, it focuses exclusively on Apple's long established brand image as a maker of computers for creative people.

The ad featuring Gandhi diverts the audience's attention away from any negative aspects of Apple's products by focusing on the idea that Apple computers are for the brightest, most intelligent people—the upper crust of achievers. By urging people to "Think different," the ad

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

encourages them to aspire to be more creative, more innovative, and more independent. Of course, using a particular brand of computer can't, by itself, transform a person into a great thinker or leader. However, using a product that is associated with an elite group *can* make people feel better about themselves. Some people have criticized Apple's decision to use Gandhi's photograph to sell an image of elite achievement. One Apple user became so angry at the company's appropriation of Mohandas Gandhi's image that he promised never again to buy another Apple computer. In a letter to the online magazine *Salon*, the author explained that Apple is "trying to sell each of us an image of ourselves. Which is precisely what Gandhi spent his life trying to help people strip away."

### CONCLUSION

### Restatement of thesis

While the ad featuring Gandhi has angered a few people, it is still an extremely effective advertisement. The repetition of the "Think different" theme, the careful composition, the association of the product with a great leader's positive accomplishments, and the omission of any discussion of any possible negative features all help communicate the point that Apple computers are for creative, independent thinkers. The irony of this ad, however, is that its creators probably do not want their audience thinking *too* differently. Some independent thinkers might choose to live with less technology, for instance, or might decide to design their own, better, computers. Instead, the advertisers want people to be just different enough to choose the elite cachet of Apple

## Evaluation of an Ad *continued*

Judgment of the  
ad's potential effect  
on people

computers without considering the possible advantages of other choices. People who are persuaded to buy an Apple computer because of this ad might be quite satisfied with their purchase. However, they shouldn't be disappointed if they find they haven't automatically become more intelligent, more creative, or more independent as a result.

# Evaluation of an Ad

## Definition

An **evaluation of an ad** is an effective way to sort out the powerful, persuasive messages that pervade our daily lives. An evaluation of an ad examines the ad's persuasive techniques in order to judge the ad's effectiveness and its possible effects on consumers.

Many evaluations of ads use the structure illustrated in the framework below. Print this framework and use it as a guide when you write your own evaluation of an ad.

## Framework

## Directions and Explanations

### Introduction

- Open with an attention getter.
- Describe the ad and state the target audience.
- End with a thesis statement that shows your opinion of the ad.

**Grab their attention** Say something interesting that captures your readers' attention. Open with an interesting statement, pose a surprising question, or use a thought-provoking quotation or statistic.

**Paint a picture** Help your readers visualize the ad by describing the images, colors, text, and spacing. Include a summary of the ad's written or spoken copy. Also, identify the ad's target audience as well as its marketing purpose and strategy.

**Make your point** Structure your thesis in two parts. One part should judge the ad's persuasiveness and the other part should evaluate the ad's effect on its audience.



### Body

- Include the first main point based on the evaluation criteria, with evidence from the ad.
- Include second main point with evidence, and so on.

**Present your evidence** Provide proof, examples, and other evidence to support your evaluation of the ad. Use any notes you took during prewriting as a source for this evidence.

**Explain persuasive techniques** Make sure your readers understand the persuasive techniques you will go on to discuss.



### Conclusion

- Sum up and reinforce the thesis.
- Restate your judgment about the ad's potential effect.

**Restate the thesis** Summarize your main points and restate your main idea in a new or fresh way.

**Make a judgment** Bring your evaluation to a close by discussing the ad's effect—or potential effect—on individuals or society.