

Planet or Plastic

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Unrecyclable and wrongly disposed plastic has become a huge problem. People tend to use significantly more plastic products than ever before. Specifically, here in the USA, people do not pay attention to recycling and reducing the use of plastic products; therefore, it ends up in the environment – oceans, rivers, forests, etc. The video called “Planet or Plastic” created by National Geographic and McCann agency in 2018 warns society about this serious problem. It sets the general idea of disposal of plastic and shows the harmful effects for nature. The video summarizes what has been done in order to make people aware of the harm that plastic does to the Earth. The short film is extremely kairotic because it was made in 2018 when people started to really worry about marine debris. Another usage of the kairos is when National Geographic used social media to bring attention to the campaign. It was relevant to use Instagram than any other form of social media because of the popularity of this online platform. The video creators effectively use rhetoric including data, text, and pictures, making the audience think about the devastating effects of plastic usage and wrong disposal of it.



National Geographic is an organization that is meant to explore the world and bring the learned information to the public. It makes people aware of different problems, brings new knowledge, and educates individuals to embed new chances to protect the world and reduce the harmful waste (“Our Story”). National Geographic united with McCann agency to create this specific video. McCann Worldgroup is a marketing agency that collaborate with big organizations. They help them to establish strategic for popularizing their work (“McCann”). The clip could be used to help the public to understand the actual, invisible side of trash, and make them think about recycling or avoiding plastic products. It is meant for people who have participated in the campaign to summarize what their activities have done for the general understanding of the marine debris problem. National Geographic dedicated its June magazine to explore in depth the issue and bring awareness of plastic pollution and waste. The video can be seen on social media and the internet, leading to a bigger audience. The text in the middle of the video is in German, meaning that the video could be meant also for

German audience, emphasizing the main idea in their native language. Other text is in English so a broader audience could understand it.

The video starts with pathos. The first text says, “Awareness of planet Earth’s problems are at all time high” (00:01). It is used as a call for awareness, making the audience think about a crucial problem that has to be solved in the near future. The text is all capital letters and in bold making people really pay attention to what the problem is. The next image presented is an extremely dirty river with a lot of trash in it. There are people living in the conditions of this pollution. It brings awareness to think about the problem and try to address it. This scene is related to the pathos to grab people’s attention and make them feel emotional before starting to address the real data and facts later in the clip.



The pathos continues in the next scene. The lines state that generally Americans know that there is a problem; thus, people feel powerless to solve it. In the background there is a photo of plastic trash. I think this combination of photo and text provides the real issue which is that everybody knows that plastic is the main matter. It is being thrown into the water bodies, but nobody knows how to help it; therefore, they choose not to do anything.

The ethos is presented by showing a lot of pictures of spreads from the magazine. The different pictures presented the devastating effects of the marine debris. There are animals covered in plastic, and people living in trash. Also, there is a part of the Instagram posts that people have posted (00:42). There was a hashtag released #planetorplastic, and it helped to find all of those people who cared and participated in the campaign in one place. I think the word “or” is highlighted because it emphasizes that it is a choice between both, and it cannot be compromised. It is ethos because a lot of people were shown participating in the movement. It helps the audience to see what has been done in order to resolve this issue and maybe inspire non-participants to take an action. This part of the video creates a feeling that a lot of people care, and the problem can be reduced only if everybody takes an action to help. It was also said that the hashtag helped to collect initiatives in over 40 countries. In addition to ethos, it is also a strong part of logos because it shows that a lot of countries do care about the issue; therefore, people tend to act in a more positive way.

National Geographic presented the logos when they reached out in social media (Instagram) to their 94 million followers to take action (00:44). This organization created an online pledge to help them to reduce 1 billion plastic items from littering the ocean by 2020. It was presented that already 201,123,167 people have already voted. I think it shows the reasoning and activity behind their actions. There are mentioned specific numbers to make people aware that everything is happening, and there is still place for improvement.

Logos and ethos work together in some sections of the video. The first half of video nobody was talking, only later two lines have been said by a man: “Planet or Plastic” and “Den Unterschied machst DU.” The second line means, “YOU make the difference,” and it is originally in German (00:59). The word “DU” (“YOU” in English) is capitalized, expressing the personal impact on the plastic problems. Those words were said in a steady and calm male voice. It could indicate the power and confidence of the facts presented. After that in the middle of the video, there is a short clip of the US Senate that addressed the issue (01:16). This part of the video is logos and ethos because there is a politician talking, which means that he is in a position of authority, and a lot of people would trust him. He discusses the June magazine that was created



to address the problem of pollution. The clip of the Senate conference makes people trust the information in the video and makes the whole message stronger. It is ethos because the information was presented to the audience from a highly-ranked person. He was explaining a brief insight in the marine debris problem; therefore, it can also be an example of logos.

The pathos is presented in a form of music and sound effects. There is a sad and calm music that makes the audience think of the devastating side of plastic usage, specifically the pollution it makes. At the end it turns to a bit brighter note. The music means that there is a hope. We just all need to take some action. In the background, there is a clock ticking, and it shows that time is running out. We have to do something to solve the issue; otherwise, it could be too late. I think the music is a brilliant use of pathos because of the sentimental, mysterious, and sad feeling it brings.

The video creators successfully used rhetoric to catch people's attention and make them believe the provided message. The visuals, for example, picture and text, were used to tell a clear message and make people remember the short film for some time. It made people think about their choices in plastic usage and recycling it properly. The song in the background set a perfect effect on putting the correct mood and emotions. Also, images and text that they used aligned perfectly with each other and made people feel sympathy toward the issue. Overall, it was a truly effective video because of the way it presented the information.

Works Cited

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