

### Tipping a Voters Mind

What persuades you? This is what all marketers keep in mind when they come up with the latest advertisement. Whether we recognize it or not, we are convinced by techniques that are all reflected in the ways that advertisements persuade us and they come in many forms. Specifically during elections, we begin to see hundreds of campaigns ads both for the soon to be elected president and/or propositions advertisements. We don't immediately recognize the impacts they have on us and in The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell, he opens the door for us to truly understand what makes these messages so impactful that they have the power to tip and begin epidemics. We can apply this to ways in which a voters mind is tipped. The most effective persuasive technique used to appeal to voters is Ethos. Ethos involves trust, not only in who is sending the message, but also in the way they are portraying it. This concept of trust is seen in The Tipping Point and is expressed in the Law of the Few, which tells us that in order to spread or tip an epidemic we must be part of a small group that we are close to and trust so that together will come up with a way of sending a message that will stick.

Gladwell explains that there are important components and people that will help an epidemic or idea tip. In the book he introduces the Law of the Few, which states that little things make a big difference. This law that Gladwell describes to his readers in detail, reveals what components and people he is talking about. We learn that what he calls Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen are the people who make a message stick. And also of the special components that in order for a message to begin to spread, it must start off amongst a small group of people who care and trust each other. Connectors know all the right people and spread the message, Mavens know all the facts and provide the message and Salesmen know how to talk to people and persuade the message.

Connectors, according to Gladwells book, The Tipping Point, are very important in conveying a message and making sure it sticks. A message could not be even brought to our attention if it wasn't for what Gladwell calls, Connectors. The

role of Connectors is described by Gladwell, acknowledging that, "Connectors are important for more than simply the number of people they know. Their importance is also a function of the kinds of people they know" (46). Not only does this explain that Connectors are essential to spreading a message or idea, it allows us to look deeper into just how these kinds of people do what they do. The spread of a message or idea is not possible without these connectors, which also implies that the spread of a message is not possible without Ethos. In order to even take into consideration what these Connectors are telling us, we have to have a trust bond with them. When these people connect with us, we learn to trust them, if it is not the case that we already do. Their personality as well as the connection we have with them, make their message or idea that much more impactful. Because we know and are comfortable with these people, we take what they say into consideration and as a result of that trustworthiness, we help spread their message, which we are convinced is the right route to take. The idea of these connectors being a key component to persuasion is also seen in politics. There is a video campaign ad in which Bill Clinton shows his support for President Obama. Clinton is very well known and his ideas and morals are very well respected by the American people. Clinton says, "That's what happened when I was president. We need to keep going with his plan" (Bill Clinton Stars In New Obama Ad). As a result of that, when the American people see that Clinton supports Obama, they realize that there must be a strong reason for that and they begin to support Obama as well. Ethos plays a huge part in whether or not politicians can gain support of the voters. They have to rely on the trust that the American people will have on past generations and realize that in order to really get those voters on their side, they have to prove they have the trust of someone that already has the trust of the people and this is why Bill Clinton serves as a great example of what a Connector is. He is very politically active, which makes him ideal for being a Connector; he has his foot in many circles of people. He had a message he wanted to spread and because he already had the trust of so many people and he was well recognized, it was simple for his viewers to be convinced that Obama was the ideal candidate for the presidential elections.

Not only are Connectors important, but another type of individual Gladwell calls Mavens, also play an important part in making a message stick through the

rhetorical appeal of Ethos. Gladwell indicates that the relationship we develop with these types of people will serve as a way to persuade us. "The fact that Mavens want to help...turns out to be an awfully effective way of getting someones attention" (Gladwell 67). Mavens genuinely want to help and they do it for no other reason than to help. It's what makes them happy. When ideas tip, it's most effective when it's done through people that we can trust. They are persuasive in the sense that they do not find any special interest in doing what they do. Not only that but they have all the information on a certain topic that one would ever need to know. This is a very persuasive technique when it comes to tipping a voters mind. Ethos allows us to trust who we are getting the information from and Mavens are especially easy to trust because they genuinely want to help, and they know the exact information needed to earn your trust. The main focus and rhetoric appeal used seems to always be Ethos. For example in proposition campaigns. During the 2012 elections there were many propositions being voted on. One of those was Proposition 30 which involved raising taxes to ensure that schools got more money. To some this may seem outrageous and they may hear it and think, "well why would I want my taxes to go up," but when there are campaign ads like the one produced for Yes on Prop 30, it may change their minds. In this video we see people who we trust with knowing the correct information about the education system. There are recognized people in this video like the Marin County Superintendent of schools, a community college professor and even Governor Jerry Brown himself. This campaigns ad looks to use Ethos as its main source of persuasion. They use the knowledge of the trust we will have from experienced people who know the real issue and what's really going on. Having someone who knows the subject well, makes them trustworthy and therefore makes what they have to say a lot more impactful or "sticky." In this particular situation, the teachers and the Governor himself were a type of Mavens. They are experts in their field and know exactly what they are talking about when it comes to education and they truly care about what happens with the people affected by whether or not the proposition passes. Yes, teachers would benefit from the passing of Prop 30 given that they would get increased supplies for their classroom, but they have characteristics of Mavens. Though they would benefit, their primary goal is to help their students and not so much themselves. They knew all the facts and simply provided us with the facts and correct information to help us. In particular

to help the millions of students that would benefit from this change in law. We learned to trust these “mavens” because they genuinely want to provide us with information that they are very educated about. This campaign ad was very particular in the people they chose to express this message. They purposefully chose people that we would trust to have the correct facts about the issue at hand and what better people to speak on behalf of education than teachers themselves.

Salesmen could be described as the persuaders. Once the Connectors tell the message and the Maven provide you with the information about the message, it is up to the Salesmen to add final touches, meaning that they finish convincing you of what you are presented with. In The Tipping Point when Malcolm Gladwell describes the studies Sesame Street did to ensure that their show was as successful as it possibly could within toddlers, they decided to try out showing celebrities on the show to see what impact it would have on its viewers. “Sesame street succeeded because it learned how to make television sticky” (Gladwell 76). Part of this “stickiness” was caused by the celebrity appearance that was made on the show. These celebrities are people that viewers already have a strong connection with and they feel like they can trust them. What this allows marketers to do is persuade their message. When we recognize someone and we see that they are in support of a message or certain idea, we consciously or unconsciously also begin to want to follow what they are doing. These celebrities are people we are attracted to because they have enthusiasm. An this is what separates Salesmen from Connectors. In the Bill Clinton example, though he was a celebrity of some sort, that is not the reason we trusted him. We trusted him because of his credibility as a politician, whereas the celebrities on Sesame Street gained our trust because they possessed the enthusiasm to capture our attention. In the These people could be considered the Salesmen. The producers of Sesame Street are the Connectors and the information they provided for its audience made them the Mavens as well, but they needed something more to completely make their messages and ideas impactful on the audience they were going for. Celebrities tend to have a charismatic personality because they want to win their audience over. This is the same of Salesmen; they are energetic and have enthusiasm, which makes them great persuaders. The celebrity appearance added to the trust built between the audience and the show

making the contents of the show more sticky to children who watched the show. In 2008 when Obama was running for president, his “Yes We Can” speech became very powerful and it was used by many to promote Obama as the best choice for the presidency. Many recording artists got together to make a video in support of Obama in which they used his words to make lyrics for a song. Obama was probably already convincing enough, but when his support by such well known celebrities was made clear to the public, we began to feel an even deeper connection with him. In this video there were celebrities like Will.I.Am and John Legend, who are known for both doing things for people and having inspirational songs. We trust them because we know that they want what is good for the people. The celebrities featured in this video become the Salesmen because like stated before; they add the final touches of persuasion. Obama’s speech was already powerful and very persuasive, but adding celebrity endorsement, especially those we trust, makes Obama’s message that much more impactful.

Some may argue that one cannot be solely convinced by Ethos, and this may be true. But at it’s core, Ethos plays a bigger role than perhaps Pathos or Logos. Pathos involves being conveyed by emotions and Logos involves being persuaded by facts, but neither one of these would have the full effect if it wasn’t by someone we trust to provide us with accurate information. In an advertisement attempt to stop cigarette smoking, there is an image of a young womyn who is hooked on the mouth by a fish hook. It represents how hooked she is on smoking and when we see it we get a sense of pain and some sort of disgust at how badly she must be hooked. When we see this advertisement, it clearly uses Pathos but that is not the only rhetorical appeal used. In cases like these it’s not only the message, it’s the messenger. The messenger has to be someone that we trust. At the top of the picture, there are in capital blue letters, “NHS,” which is an organization that support healthy decision making. Because we see this logo, we are more likely to believe the advertisement to be more true and have the message stick with us.

Through determining whether or not it was emotions, facts or trustworthiness that convinced us, it can be concluded that what truly matters is the level of trust we have in the person conveying the message. Whether or not we are persuaded,

determines whether or not the message will be memorable. If there is not a strong group of people backing up a message or idea, it will not be effective. It is perhaps hard to look at advertisements and recognize these key concepts, but if we take the time to analyze the media, we will see these rhetorical appeals more clearly. In The Tipping Point we see clear examples of this concept that the messenger matters a lot more than the message itself and we see this even in advertisements that we are exposed to in our everyday life.

#### Cited Sources:

Bill Clinton supports Obama- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fal9dqY08Mc>  
Prop 30- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtO1xsnWsw4>  
Pathos example: <http://writinghood.com/writing/a-great-example-of-a-rhetorical-analysis/>  
Yes we can Obama song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yq0tMYPDJQ>

**KNOW (Mastery):** When this argumentative essay was assigned we had just gotten done with our exhibition where we created campaign ads in groups for a specific proposition. We were halfway done with "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell when we did exhibition and when we were done with it we came back to class and finished the remaining of the book. In this book we learned what Gladwell thinks causes epidemics. This includes epidemics in messages, ideas or even trends. We learned about what makes those things stick and how we can apply that to something that we want to spread. Once we were done exploring the concepts of The Law of the Few, The Stickiness Factor, The Power of Context and Rhetorical appeals and how these things work together, our task was to write an essay in which we talked about what we thought was the most persuasive technique used by the media to persuade us. We had to use evidence from the book and from political campaign ads as well. This essay was a way to put everything that we had learned together in one piece; to make sense of it. It also served as a way to really understand what it is the media does to persuade us. Our essential question was "What is the most effective persuasion technique used to tip a voters mind?" Personally, this artifact made me wonder about all the things going on around me. Reading "The Tipping Point" made me realize how perhaps the war on drugs was started and what could happen in order to reverse it. Yes, it is true that mass incarceration is a huge problem in the United States, but what can we do to tip that? I feel like reading and writing this essay has helped me understand just how much of a role not only the media but people around us, play. When I think of things that could possibly tip this epidemic of Blacks and Latinos going to prison everyday, I think about the education that we are providing them. Gladwell talks about something small creating a big change, if we can put a system in place where we guarantee that teachers are the best they can be and that students are in an environment where it is easy for them to learn, then all those problems can be fixed, I however also realize that mass incarceration and most of the problems in the world are due to peoples mind set, so how do we tip that? This essay taught me how to better write argumentative essays. I learned exactly how to write my claim, introduction body paragraphs and conclusions. We did many workshops in class where we worked on each of those components separately and my essay proves that I took time on each one of them. I did not want to have something where my introduction was better than my body paragraphs or my conclusion better than my counter argument. I learned that in order to prove a point everything has to be equally well written.

**DO (Application):** My essay was about how I believe that Ethos is the most effective persuasion technique used by the media to persuade voters. I used Gladwells ideas of the Law of the Few and campaign ads to prove my claim. My claim was, "The most effective persuasive technique used to appeal to voters is Ethos. Ethos involves trust, not only in who is sending the message, but also in the way they are portraying it. This concept of trust is seen in "The Tipping Point" and is expressed in the Law of the Few, which tells us that in order to spread or tip an epidemic we must be part of a small group that we are close to and trust so that together will come up with a way of sending a message that will stick." I think that Ethos is used more often than the other rhetorical appeals because whether or not we are persuaded has a lot to do with whether or not we trust where and who the information is coming from. Though I had doubts in how good my claim was, I made edits to it and made it the best I could with the help of my teacher. The leadership skill associated with this artifact was Thinking Critically. This is an argumentative essay where you provide a claim and you are trying to convince your reader that what you said in your claim is correct. This process may seem easy because you know exactly what you want and need to prove, it is not. There is a lot of thought that went into it to try to find the best pieces of evidence that would not only prove my claim but impact my readers. As far as evidence from campaign ads, I chose advertisements that they were likely to have seen so that they could realize that Ethos was, without a doubt, used. Through this artifact I have proven that am able to think critically. I took the time to think about the evidence I would use and what impact it would have on my reader as well as coming up with a solid claim that I truly believe in.

**REFLECT (Metacognition):** This essay demonstrates my growth as a writer. If I were to look at past essays that I've written I would probably choose this one as the best one overall. I feel that my organization in this essay is way better than any other essays I have written. I also feel that my analysis has become much more thought provoking. Through my analysis I can express what I believe and it's a way for me to communicate with my audience. Even if they didn't read the introduction or conclusion, as long as I had solid analysis for my pieces of evidence, they would understand and be persuaded by it. The skills I

learned through this essay can help me on other classes like History for example, but even farther than that, it has made me feel like I am ready for essays that I may have to write in college. The difficulty level of this essay prepared me for what I may be expecting in college. It has proven me to be a learner that doesn't give up or settle for something. When I had originally come up with my claim I was pretty confident in it, but as time went by I began to change my belief and instead of keeping a claim just to get it over with, I changed it until it was something that I truly believed. I did this because I wanted to enjoy writing this essay and I wasn't going to if the whole time I was trying to prove something that I didn't believe in anymore. I am proud of my essay but I feel that maybe after the third draft, I could focus on making a stronger conclusion, one that really ties everything together. I am also proud because I usually don't manage my time so effectively but for this artifact I used every chance I got in class to get it done.